









# THE GROUNDWORK OF BRITISH HISTORY

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## Part I

*From the Coming of the Romans  
to the Union of the Crowns*

BY

GEORGE TOWNSEND WARNER, M.A.

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## PREFACE

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In giving the name *The Groundwork of British History* to this book, the writers seek to make clear the plan on which it is constructed.

If in reading it a boy comes to carry with him some idea of the origin and sequence and relation of events, and gains some notion of history *as a whole*, he is beginning to build on what may be called a groundwork. Much will remain to be learnt and many details to be added, but these will fall naturally into their places, if the mind is already prepared with a groundwork or general plan on which to fit them.

If, on the other hand, there is no such groundwork in his mind, additional knowledge may merely produce additional confusion. Every teacher in history is only too familiar with the painful method of "learning"—so called—by which a boy will get up some pages of a book so thoroughly as to be able to answer every question on the pages set, and yet have no grip of his history as a whole. Take him "outside the lesson" and he is at once bewildered and lost—with perhaps a suppressed sense of injustice; feeling that to ask questions "outside the lesson" is not playing the game.

Such a perplexed learner often deserves more sympathy than he gets. He dutifully burdens his memory with all the names and dates and facts which he finds on the pages prescribed, not knowing which are the most important, not having been taught to connect events with their past causes or their future developments. Now and



again his memory, being unsupported by any general sense of *where he is*, plays him false, and he produces those grotesque onslaughts upon chronology and probability with which we are all acquainted.

It is to meet such difficulties that our book is directed. Our aim is to provide the reader with a groundwork at once solid and broad-based, upon which increasing knowledge may gradually be built; to trace out the main threads of British history, omitting small and unfruitful details; to treat events in logical sequence by pursuing one subject at a time; and to concentrate the mind upon what was the chief policy or course of action in each age.

In order to do this the book strives to encourage the faculties of understanding and reason rather than mere memory; and to make boys think why things happened and what the consequences were. For example, the history of the thirteenth century is grouped round the Making of Parliament; the Hundred Years War is followed from its beginnings in Edward III's reign to its end in Henry VI's without interrupting the story to narrate events which, though contemporary, had no logical connection with it; the baronial troubles culminating in the Wars of the Roses are treated as a whole, beginning with the overthrow of the legitimate line of Richard II by the house of Lancaster, and passing through the troubles of Henry IV at home to the final outburst in Henry VI's reign. The history of Scotland is more fully dealt with than is usual in school histories: the way in which Scotland was united, the fortunes of the house of Bruce, the misfortunes of the house of Stuart, the cause of the Scottish Reformation, are treated in a continuous series of chapters.

The method is the same as that followed in Mr. Warner's *Brief Survey of British History*, but the book is intended for those who have got beyond the elementary outlines, and who require a general view of the broadening stream of our national history.

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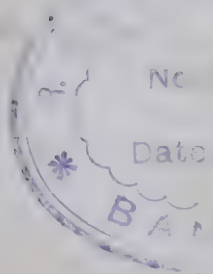
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## PART I

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### I. The Romans in Britain

55 B.C.—A.D. 410

The invasions of Julius Cæsar are generally taken as a suitable point from which to begin the history of our land, because Cæsar's own writings give us the earliest records that are of much value in an historical sense. It is true that there were earlier visitors. Posidonius of Rhodes came to Britain some sixty years before Cæsar, and long before him a Marseilles merchant, named Pytheas, bringing a fleet northwards in search of tin and amber, somewhere about 330 B.C., had landed in Kent and spent some months there. But both he and Posidonius were mere travellers, and, though they gathered a little about the customs of the inhabitants, they say nothing of their history.

One of the great differences, however, that mark off the first six hundred years of our history from what comes after, lies in this very fact that we have very few written records; and even the records which tell of the Roman occupation do not say much about the sort of people who dwelt in our island in these early days. Fortunately there is another source of information. Those who study races and languages can say something about the people; and from what these primitive people left behind them—their ornaments, weapons, and household implements—antiquarians can judge of their ways of living and fighting.

The people with whom Cæsar came in contact were Celts.



They were of kindred race to the Gauls with whom he had battled on the other side of the Channel—indeed, it was to hinder them giving help to their Continental brethren that Cæsar made his expeditions. In Britain, however, there were two branches of Celts—the Gaels, from whom are descended the Irish and the Highlanders; and the Britons, who then dwelt all over England and the Lowlands of Scotland, and whose descendants now inhabit Wales.

Cæsar's first expedition (55 B.C.) did little more than show him that the task he had undertaken was more difficult than he imagined. He was in the country for a very short time. In the next year he came with a larger force, landed in Kent, and moved northwards. Cassivellaunus, chief of the Catuvellauni, strove to unite the British tribes in a resistance, but they were not trustworthy. One tribe, the Trinobantes, thought it prudent to join the side of the invaders. Cæsar's legions stormed the British camp near St. Albans, and Cassivellaunus offered to submit. Cæsar, whose only object was to impress on the Britons the idea that the arm of Rome was strong and could reach far, accepted the submission, and withdrew his troops.

For close on a hundred years Britain was left to itself. In A.D. 43 the Emperor Claudius sent another expedition. By this time the policy of the Empire had changed. Cæsar's expedition had been punitive; that is to say, its object had been to deter the Britons from disturbing the borders of the Empire. We are accustomed to see similar expeditions on the Indian frontier. But just as has often happened in India, a punitive expedition is the forerunner of conquest. The design of Claudius was to add to his own glory by adding Britain to the Empire.

This task was carried on by one Roman officer after another. Aulus Plautius drove Caractacus, son of Cymbeline, into exile, reducing the south-east, and the Emperor Claudius himself made a state visit to the island in order to receive in person the submission of the British chiefs. Ostorius Scapula carried the Roman arms westwards, defeated and captured the exiled Caractacus, who had made himself leader of the Silures in South

Wales. The Britons still struggled on in North Wales until Suetonius Paulinus drove them backwards into Mona (Anglesea), and in a great battle completely overthrew them. As the Druids had done their best to inflame the Britons against the invaders, they were all slaughtered, and their altars and sacred groves destroyed. The full fruits of this victory could not, however, be gathered, as during the absence of the legions a formidable revolt had broken out in the east. Boadicea, the deposed queen of the Iceni, had been flogged; this roused the indignation of her former subjects, who having had their lands taken from them, and being made to pay heavy taxes, were only too glad of the chance of rising against their oppressors. Rebellion spread fast; Colchester, London, and St. Albans were sacked and burned; all the Roman officials were massacred; the ninth legion was cut to pieces. Suetonius Paulinus hurried back, only just in time. Once again the Roman discipline proved too strong for the Britons to contend against; the rebels were defeated, and Boadicea, seeing that all was lost, poisoned herself. She had, however, brought the Roman power in Britain to the very verge of ruin.

Suetonius  
Paulinus.

Boadicea

With the coming of Julius Agricola as governor in 78, we pass from the stage of conquest to the stage of settlement. Not that Agricola had not some stern fighting to do. He had again to penetrate to Anglesea, his light-armed men swimming the straits to reach the enemy. Having struck down Wales, he marched north and overthrew the Caledonians at the battle of the "Graupian Hill", near the River Tay. But he was more than a mere soldier. The Roman historian Tacitus, his son-in-law, speaks of him as knowing that "Conquest can never be secure while it loads the vanquished with injury and oppression". To those who resisted he was ruthless, but he strove by kind treatment to win the love of those who yielded. He made the taxes less oppressive; he arranged that the forced service with the army should be as little burdensome as possible, and in a short time was rewarded with a willing stream of levies; he encouraged the Britons to set up courts of justice, and to build better houses; he did all he could to spread the use of the Roman tongue; he checked plundering

Epoch of  
Settlement.

Julius Agri-  
cola, 78-85.

raids by building a wall from the Clyde to the Forth, and by leaving strong garrisons on the Welsh border; in short, he did all that was possible to bring to the Britons that peace which was usual in a well-ordered Roman province.

The process of "Romanizing" Britain, which Agricola began, was carried on by his successors. The condition of the people improved. Peace brought prosperity. The Roman roads which were stretched over the face of the country served to convey more than Roman legions. The chief ones deserve notice. The Watling Street ran from Dover to London, and thence to Wroxeter; the Ermine Street ran from London to Lincoln, and thence to York, with branches going to Carlisle and Newcastle; the Fosseway went from Lincoln through Leicester, Cirencester, and Bath to Ilchester, Axminster, and Exeter; another road went from London to Silchester, whence branches went on through Winchester and

**Corn Growing.** Salisbury. A busy trade sprang up. To get plenty of corn, and get it cheap, was always an important object in Roman policy; it was needed for the troops in the island, for the Roman camps on the German frontier, and for the free gifts of corn made to the lazy populace at Rome. Britain was well suited to growing corn. Its fertility was a source of wonder to writers of the time; one speaks of it as "a land wealthy from its heavy crops, its rich pastures, and its veins of metals"; another assures us that on one occasion 800 vessels were sent thither to convey the corn. All agreed that it deserved the title of the "Granary of the North".

Along with this active corn trade came progress in the mining of tin, lead, and copper, in the making of weapons and iron implements, and in industrial arts such as weaving, dyeing, and pottery. Towns sprang up with well-built houses. Numbers of Romans and foreigners settled in Britain. The history of the island flowed on in a fairly peaceful course. Now and again there came a raid from the north or west; now and again an emperor appeared to visit his distant province. Hadrian **Visits of late Emperors.** came in A.D. 119 and built the wall from Solway to Tyne that bears his name. Near a hundred years later (A.D. 208) Severus strove to complete the conquest of Caledonia, but died at York. Again a hundred years pass, and we find the



most interesting connection between Britain and the Roman Empire in the fact that it was from Britain that Constantine, himself the son of a British mother, started on that memorable expedition which was to end in his becoming the first Christian emperor. Again another hundred years, and Rome, struggling with invaders nearer home, had to withdraw her legions from her distant colony. In 410 the Emperor Honorius told the Britons that they were no longer bound to his allegiance.

Henceforth the Britons were to stand or fall alone. Yet the power to stand alone was no longer in them. They had been civilized into an orderly community, but they had not been welded into a nation. They had copied Roman habits, worn Roman dress, spoken the tongue of their conquerors, dwelt in Roman villas, bathed in Roman baths, tasted Roman luxury; but they had absorbed none of the qualities that had made Rome great. They had grown to love their goods in peace, but they had not learned that it is only the strong man armed that keepeth them so. They had leaned on the might of Rome, till they had lost all the rough vigour and love of independence that had marked Boadicea and Caractacus; and when deserted by the power that had first tamed and then protected them, they were bound to fall a prey to the fierce invaders who were pressing westwards.

Effects of  
Roman  
Civilization.

Weakness of  
the Britons.

---

## II. The Saxon Invaders

The story of the Roman occupation is interesting historically, but it is not important. It is a thing by itself: it bore no fruit in the future. In France and Spain, for example, the effects of the Roman occupation lasted on and have made deep marks on their history. The very language of these countries is descended from the tongue of their conquerors. But in Britain what the Romans did perished after they left. Our language and our institutions are Saxon. It is therefore with the coming of the Saxons that the continuous history of our country begins. Since that time there have been many changes but no violent break.

The Britons did not remain long unmolested. Raids of Picts from the north and Scots from Ireland grew more and more frequent, and a new terror was added by the appearance of Jute and Saxon sea rovers from the shores of Germany and Frisia. An appeal for help was made to Aëtius, the Roman commander in Gaul: it bears the pathetic title of "The Groans of the Britons"; they prayed Aëtius to deliver them, "for", said they, "the barbarians drive us to the sea and the sea drives us back to the barbarians". No help, of course, came from Aëtius, who had his hands full with the Huns, and the British ruler, Vortigern, in despair hired a band of Jutes to war against the Picts.

This was a copy of Roman policy, but it was an unsuccessful copy. Rome, until later days, could keep her mercenaries in order; Vortigern could not. The Jutes turned against him, and under their leaders, who, as legend says, bore the names of Hengist and Horsa, seized on the island of Thanet, from which the Britons could not expel them. The Saxon conquest had begun. More than a hundred and fifty years were to pass before it was complete.

Starting from Thanet the Jutish conquest spread along the coast of Kent. Fresh hordes came over to aid their comrades: Vortigern and the Britons were driven back; the fortified towns along the shore were starved into surrender. Twenty years saw Kent completely conquered.

A few years later a band of Saxons overran Sussex, giving the land their name; while another force, starting from Southampton, fought their way inland and occupied what is now Hampshire, but was called after them Wessex. A fourth band appeared off the mouth of the Thames and seized Essex. Another tribe—the Angles—descended on what has been called from them East Anglia,<sup>1</sup> and spread farther north over the coast of Lincolnshire to the Humber mouth.

The process of conquest was slow; it was not done by large forces working in combination. The country was reft from the

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps scarcely necessary to point out that as Sussex is the land of the South Saxons, so Essex, Wessex, and Middlesex are the lands of the East, West, and Middle Saxons, while Norfolk and Suffolk are the north and south folk of the Angles.

## BATTLES OF DEORHAM AND CHESTER 7

Britons piecemeal. Each set of invaders came, coveted land, and had to press farther into the country, or along the coast, to get it. The fortune of war wavered. At Mount Badon, in 520, the West Saxons met with a crushing defeat which checked their advance for years, but on the whole the Britons lost ground steadily. The fighting was fierce; neither side spared the other; step by step, as the Saxons advanced, the Britons who were left alive withdrew. Few stayed to be slaves to the victors. Indeed between Britons and Saxons there could be no peace; year after year saw the Britons squeezed, first into the centre of the country, and then by degrees steadily westwards: the Britons were falling back towards the mountainous country where they had fought their last fight against the Romans.

Gradual  
Nature of  
Conquest.

Two battles are usually taken as marking the end of the Saxon conquest. These are the battle of Deorham in 577 and the battle of Chester in 613. Of course it is not true to say that with them fighting between Briton and Saxon comes to an end. Nor were the "Welsh", as the Saxons termed the Britons, subdued. Nearly another seven centuries had to pass before this was accomplished, but after these two battles there was no longer any question of which power was dominant in England. There was no hope of the Britons recovering their lost ground. Consequently these two battles deserve especial notice.

The victory of Deorham was won by the West Saxons under their King Ceawlin. The site of the battle is not far from Gloucester, and as a fruit of it, that city with Bath and Cirencester fell into Saxon hands. Yet the importance of the battle lies not in the extent of the conquest nor in the richness of the plunder, but in its locality. It gave the Saxons command of the Severn mouth, and so cut the Welsh of Wales off from the Welsh of the South-west of Britain. Precisely the same work was done in the north by the battle of Chester: this was won by an Anglian king, Ethelfrith of Northumbria, who, after hurling back an invasion of Picts at Dawstone near Jedburgh, fought his way westwards. The Welsh mustered all their forces against him. Two thousand monks came from the monastery of Bangor-

Battle of  
Deorham,  
577.

Battle of  
Chester,  
613.



isced to pray for victory while the "Comrades"<sup>1</sup> fought. Ethelfrith was victorious, and remorselessly slew the monks, just as Suetonius Paulinus had massacred the Druids. "Whether they bear arms or no," said he, "they fight against us when they pray to their God." As by Deorham the Saxons won the Severn line, so Chester gave them the Dee. The Welsh were again divided. The men of Wales were split off from their kinsmen in Lancashire and Cumberland.

Little surprise need be felt that the Britons preferred to flee for refuge to the hills of the west rather than, by submitting, to live on in their old homes. In their eyes the Saxon was a barbarian, speaking an outlandish tongue and worshipping heathen gods.

Yet, barbarians though they were, the Saxons are of great interest to us, for their language has become ours, and amongst them were germs of some political institutions and ideas that are our own peculiar pride to-day.

Tacitus, who tells us of their ways when they were still living in their homes in Germany, more than three hundred years before the first of them set foot in England, makes much of their freedom. Doubtless he did so because he wished to sharpen a contrast between what he regarded as "degenerate Rome" and the "noble savage". But he did not invent the account he gives. Hence he is a good enough authority for things existing among them, though it is true that by the time the Saxons were established in England, many of these institutions had decayed, and as kings threw liberties disappeared.

In origin, then, the Saxons had thought a good deal of freedom. They kept some slaves, but did not depend on them to do the bulk of their work, as the Athenians and later Romans did. They drove out the Britons from their lands, and, in the main, tilled them for themselves, though doubtless as the invasion went further west more Britons survived, and the race-blood was more mixed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name which the Welsh had taken for themselves was *Kymry*, or Comrades. The name also survives in *Cumberland*.

<sup>2</sup> The Saxons settled down in families; this is shown by their place-names. The syllable *-ing* in a place-name denotes kindred. Thus Wokingham, Nottingham, Billingshurst, Wellington, all indicate that the original settlers in these each traced descent back to a common ancestor. Further, the common terminations *ham* and *ton* stand for "home" and "town", the enclosure which served perhaps as a fortification, and in any case



They had also deep-rooted in their nature the love of governing themselves by an assembly. In these assemblies—"folk-moots", meetings of the people—all grave matters were discussed, leaders were elected, questions of peace and war were decided. Yet we are told "no man dictated; he might persuade but he could not command". If the tribesmen agreed, they shook their spears, or clashed them on their shields; if not, they were not slow to express disapproval by loud shouts. It was, in rude shape, a government for the people by the people. And this is not unlike the aim of our present constitution.

The Folk-moot.

Folk-moots decayed as kingdoms grew. By degrees, as England became united, and the petty Saxon Kingdoms were changed into Shires, the folk-moots became "shire-moots", courts in which suits were heard and justice was done before the Ealdorman (the Shire officer), the Sheriff (*Shire-reeve*, the King's officer), the Bishop (the Church officer), and the representative men of the Shire. And below the shires were smaller divisions, the Hundred and the Township (the latter of which still survives as the parish), each with its hundred moot or township moot. Here again we must notice another mark of our national character, the love of managing our own law courts. It is true that the Saxons did not use a "jury" to declare a verdict, but the plan whereby justice was done in each division before the representative men of the division is something of the same nature. It was a refusal to allow justice to belong to the king alone, or to any set of officials, since justice is the common property of the people. And then, further, when we look at this set of assemblies, one below the other, we are reminded that the policy of the Government in our own day has been to revive something of the same kind, to set up County Councils, District

Justice.

to mark off its inhabitants. A third Saxon ending, which takes the form of *bury*, *burgh*, *borough*, is derived from the *burh*, or more elaborate entrenchment with a mound and a ditch. Hosts of examples occur, such as Bury St. Edmunds, and Edinburgh (Edwin's borough). These should be contrasted with Roman place-names, usually distinguishable by the termination *-caster*, *-chester*, or *-cester* (Latin, *castra*, a camp), such as Tadcaster, Winchester, Gloucester; or *coln* (Latin, *colonia*, a colony), such as Lincoln. British place-names are rare in England, but are generally connected with the names of their gods. As we approach Danish times we shall also have to note their place-names, of which the commonest ending is "by", e.g. Derby, Whitby, Selby.

Councils, Parish Councils, to enlarge local government, to encourage people to manage their local affairs themselves.

Folk-moots were indeed a sort of primitive governing assembly, though they were doubtless disorderly gatherings where every freeman thought he had a right to air his own noisy opinion. But these general meetings are only possible for small tribes; kings will employ a council of picked men, more manageable and orderly. So grew up the Assembly of the Wise Men or the Witan, the body from which our Parliament has by slow degrees developed. In it sat the "ealdormen", the rulers of the shires, and the "thegns", or chiefs of the king's bodyguard, who were the nobles and great men of the time; and when the Church was established in England, the archbishops and bishops took their places there also. This body more resembled the House of Lords than Parliament as a whole, for there were no commons to represent the people. Still, it had most of the powers which Parliament wields now. It made laws; it was consulted about affairs of state, on questions of peace and war, of treaties, of religion; it could elect a king; it could depose a king. Against a strong king it could do little. But when a king was feeble, or when the succession was in doubt, it could interfere.

And so, when in later days we find Parliament refusing to allow Charles I to make laws and govern at his will; or interfering in questions of religion, as it did in Henry VIII's days; or offering the crown of England, as it did to William III; or deposing a king, as it did Richard II; we may remember that it was only using powers which had belonged to its ancestor, the Saxon Witan. For most of these acts there are parallels in Saxon times. Edwin of Northumbria's Witan was consulted as to whether Christianity should be adopted; it was the Witan that placed on the throne Canute and Harold; it was the Witan that declared Edwy and the incapable Ethelred the Unready deposed from the throne.

Tacitus tells us that the Germans had no kings; but even if some bands of Saxons were without kings when they settled in England, it is certain that kings very soon became general. The title King (Cyning), which is probably

connected with "kin", shows us that the man stood as the head of his race or kindred. His chief duty was at first to lead the people in war, and accordingly no child could make an efficient king. Hence the office was not strictly hereditary. When a king died, if his eldest son was of sufficient age and a suitable man he would be made king to succeed his father; but if not, some capable man who was "kin" to the late ruler would be chosen. A brother was often made king instead of a son. For example, Alfred himself was not the direct heir. His elder brother Ethelred left sons, but Alfred was put on the throne in preference.

Kings, once made, rapidly acquired great power. One cause lay in the union of the smaller kingdoms, till at last all England came under the sway of one house, the Kings of Wessex. Another source of strength, however, The Gesiths. came from the "Gesiths". When there was need the whole mass of the people turned out to fight; a general levy of this kind was called the "Fyrd". But besides the "fyrd" there was a special set of men, the "gesiths", who bound themselves by an oath to fight for the chief. They were his war band, his bodyguard; he was their lord, their bread-giver; they dwelt in his hall, shared his booty, and lived on food of his giving. To the "fyrd" war was an occasional necessity, to the "gesith" it was the business of life. As the chiefs became kings, the "gesiths" also grew more powerful. They were called by a new name—"thegns"; they formed a sort of nobility, not of birth, but of service; and speedily became more important than the *athelings* (descendants of the royal blood) and *eorls* (men of noble birth). They held places in the Witan; they were the king's councillors; they held grants of king's land; and just as the king, by growing in power, had raised their position, so they in their turn helped to exalt the position of the king.

Summing up these matters in more technical terms: the Saxons were a people with strong ideas of liberty and a dislike of absolute government; they had kings, but the power of these was limited partly by custom, partly by an Assembly which took a great share in the government; succession to the throne was not strictly hereditary; justice was "popular", and the sphere



of local government was large. How much modern England has developed along Saxon lines may be judged by reading in the preceding sentence the words "the English are" instead of "the Saxons were". The description applies to our time as to theirs.

It is convenient to give this account of the chief Saxon institutions here at the outset, since an understanding of them will be valuable in what comes later. But it should not be thought that all of them as described here were in use among the Saxons on their arrival. The kings amassed their powers gradually; shires could not exist till the smaller kingdoms were joined into larger ones; the Witan developed as the king needed its counsels, when his kingdom became large and the distance too great for all the warriors to assemble. Political institutions are generally of slow growth and slow decay, and we must picture some growing and others decaying during the course of events which we have next to follow.

### III. The Coming of Christianity

Although little is known of the way in which the Britons had been converted to Christianity under the Roman rule, yet there is no doubt that many of them had become Christians. We hear of Alban, the first man to die for the Christian faith in England, who gave his name to St. Albans, and of three British bishops who visited a Council at Arles in 314. Indeed, when the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity, it was natural that it should be adopted in Britain. Not the least terrible thing about the Saxons in British eyes was that they were heathens. Britain, as a Christian Roman province, had felt itself a part of Europe; when it was overwhelmed by hordes of savage pagans it sank back into outer darkness. Its history, its religion, its life seemed all alike to have been swallowed up in the wave of invasion. Nothing shows more clearly the horror and loathing which the

Christianity  
under the  
Romans.



Britons felt for the Saxons than the fact that for so many years they made no attempt to convert them. It was not that there were no British missionaries; to their abiding honour, there was no lack of them. David preached in South Wales; St. Patrick converted Ireland; St. Ninian spread the Gospel in Galloway; St. Columba built the great monastery in Iona, whence for centuries flowed a stream of missionary enterprise. Yet none of them attacked the heathen Saxon. St. Columban and St. Gall even passed them by on the other side in order to labour on the Continent.

What they left undone, Rome did. Everyone knows how the first impulse was supplied; how the little fair-haired boys from Deira attracted the notice of the abbot Gregory in the slave market at Rome; how he declared they were "not Angles, but Angels", fit to be rescued from "the wrath"<sup>1</sup> to come; and vowed, when he heard the name of their king, Ælla, that "Alleluia shall be sung in the realm of Ælla". Years passed by, and Gregory, now made Pope, was able to keep his promise. It happened that King Ethelbert of Kent had married Bertha, a Christian princess from France. Gregory seized the chance thus offered to him. He sent Augustine, with forty followers, to preach the Gospel in heathen England. They landed in the year 597 at Ebbsfleet, the very landing place to which, a hundred and fifty years before, the first band of Jutes had come. A fresh Roman conquest was to begin; this time, however, it was not to be made by Roman legions for a Roman Emperor, but by Roman missionaries for the Roman Church.

Augustine's  
mission,  
597.

Augustine and his followers were monks; they belonged to the order founded in the fifth century by St. Benedict of Nursia. Benedict, while wishing that his monks should set an example of holy lives, did not mean them to be idle. *Laborare est orare*, "to work is to pray", was his maxim for his followers' guidance. Consequently, though Augustine was come to teach the Saxon warriors that there was more serious business in life than fighting and feasting and drinking, they did not incur the contempt which they would have done had the Saxons found them what

<sup>1</sup> In Latin, *De Ira*.

they would have considered idlers, persons who gave up their whole lives to meditation and prayer. And so, though Ethelbert received them with caution—"Your words", he said, "are fair, but they are new, and I cannot yet forsake what I have so long followed"—yet he gave them leave to preach and gain as many as they could to their religion. The earnest and simple teaching of the monks soon won converts, and amongst them Ethelbert himself. The king bestowed on Augustine a ruined church at Canterbury. Augustine named it "Christ Church"; it thus became, as it has remained, the first church in England—first both in time and in importance. On that site stands now the Cathedral of Canterbury; its Archbishop is the head of the Church of England.

Just as a marriage brought Kent to Christianity, so another marriage carried the faith northward. Ethelbert's daughter, Ethelburga, married Edwin, the powerful King of Northumbria. As the princess was a Christian, it was agreed that she should be free to keep her faith. And with her went a new missionary, Paulinus.

We are told of Edwin that he "commanded all the nations of the English as well as of the Britons save only Kent". He was worth winning as a convert, and Paulinus set to work to win him; his wife besought him; even the far-distant Pope wrote him letters and sent presents. Edwin was moved by their pleading and by what he thought to be the special favours of Heaven which came to him at this time: he escaped from a treacherous attempt to murder him, he won a great victory over the West Saxons, his wife bore him a daughter. He consulted his Witan as to whether they should accept the new faith. One of his councillors spoke to the king a parable, in which he likened the life of man to the swift flight of a sparrow, "flying in at one door and straightway out at another; whilst he is within he is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space, he immediately vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter from which he had come. So this life of man appears for a short space; but of what went before, or of what is to follow, we are ignorant. If therefore this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed." Paulinus

Conversion  
of Kent.

Conversion of  
Northumbria.

was called in to address the Council, and at once persuaded them to become Christians. Coifi, the heathen high priest, was the first to destroy the old idols. Edwin's subjects followed their king's example, and were baptized in thousands.

Edwin no doubt was sincere enough, but headlong zeal like that of Coifi and sudden wholesale conversions such as those of the Northumbrians did not amount to much. Those who abandon one faith for another so readily are not likely to be very firm in holding to any faith. If a time of persecution comes they will fall away again. This is exactly what happened in Northumbria. Edwin went to war with Penda, King of Mercia, and was slain at Heathfield. Paulinus and Ethelburga fled. Penda was a heathen, and his heathen warriors overran Northumbria. Many of the hasty Northumbrian Christians hastily gave up their Christianity.

This is made clear by the fact that Oswald, who came to the throne some years later, had to get teachers to preach Christianity afresh. This time, however, he got help from a Celtic source. While Penda had been ravaging Northumbria, Oswald had taken refuge amongst the Picts: from them he had learnt of Columba and his monks at Iona. Accordingly he applied to Iona. The first monk who was sent returned saying that the heathen were too stubborn to be converted. "Was it their stubbornness or your harshness?" enquired one of his brother monks named Aidan. "Did you forget to give them the milk first and then the meat?" Aidan was at once chosen to take the other's place. He speedily showed that he would not make the same mistake. By his efforts Northumbria was again converted. It is true that so long as Penda reigned, the new faith was always in danger. He struck down Oswald in battle as he had slain Edwin. Not until Penda himself fell, in 655, by the River Winwed, near Leeds, was Christianity in Northumbria secure. The old Mercian king had indeed been no savage persecutor of the Christians. "He only hated and scorned", says Bede, "those whom he saw not doing the works of the faith they had received." Yet so long as he was alive, the cause of the old gods was not lost. When he died it perished with him. After that even the Mercians were converted,



and soon the whole island was Christian. Sussex was the last to receive the faith.

A new trouble speedily arose. Some of the Saxons had been converted by Roman missionaries, others by Celtic. Wessex was converted by Birinus from North Italy, East Anglia by a Burgundian, Northumbria and Mercia by Irishmen, Essex and Sussex by Cedd and Wilfred. Each, of course, followed what their teachers taught them. Unfortunately, the teachers themselves were not agreed. The island, though one in faith, seemed likely to be divided in practice.

The difficulty indeed was not a new one. Even Augustine himself had met the British bishops and tried to persuade them to adopt Roman practices, and they had refused. In his time it was not so serious a matter, since it was the Britons who held to their own practice and the Saxons to the Roman teaching. But when the Saxons became a house divided against themselves there was grave danger. Accordingly in 664 a Synod was held at Whitby to settle the points of difference.

The champion of the Celtic or British practice was Colman, who had come from Iona, and had succeeded Aidan in his work in Northumbria. The chief upholder of the Synod of Whitby. Roman view was Wilfred, Abbot of Ripon. Wilfred had been trained in Lindisfarne, Aidan's own monastery, and might have been expected to take Aidan's views. But he had been on a pilgrimage to Rome, and had come back full of zeal for the Roman Church and Roman ways. The two argued it out before King Oswy of Northumbria, who presided at the Synod. The points of difference were not great. The Britons did not keep Easter on the same day as the Romans, they adopted a different tonsure, and had one or two other customs peculiar to themselves. Colman maintained that they should keep to the practices they had learnt from their fathers. Wilfred urged that the Britons stood alone in their habits, and that all the rest of Christendom followed Rome. At length Oswy asked Colman if the Keys of Heaven had been given to Columba as they had been given to Peter. Colman replied, "No." "Then," said the king—one may presume with a smile on his face—"if Peter is the doorkeeper I will never contradict him, lest when

I come to the gates there should be none to open them," and he decided for Wilfred and the Roman practice.

We may be tempted to regard a quarrel mainly about such things as dates and of methods of shaving the head as being nearly as trivial as the reason which Oswy gave for deciding in favour of the Romans, but we should be wrong. A much deeper question was really involved. Had England followed the British practice, she would have cut herself off from Rome and the rest of the civilized world. She would have lost all share in the art and learning which Rome alone could teach. Wilfred put the matter in a nutshell: "To fight against Rome", said he, "is to fight against the world." By deciding to accept the Roman view, England became once more a part of Christendom, a position she had not held since the coming of the Saxon invaders.

The fruits of Oswy's decision were soon gathered. The archbishopric of Canterbury being vacant, an Englishman was sent to Rome to be consecrated. He died in Rome, however, and the Pope chose as Archbishop a Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus. Theodore justified the Pope's choice as thoroughly in 668 as we shall see another archbishop justify it in 1206. He set himself to unite the Church into one, and to organize it under bishops who were each to be responsible for his own diocese. In the British Church the monastery had been the centre on which all turned. The abbot was all-powerful, the bishop merely his subordinate, whose chief work lay in ordaining clergy. Hence bishops wandered up and down the land with no settled sphere of authority, and often quarrelling; monasteries, owning no master but their own abbot, divided the Church rather than united it. What the results of the British system were may be seen in Ireland, where, in the dark days before the English conquest, the Church fell entirely into the hands of the chiefs, lost its power, and merely gave an example of disunion to a people who already thought more of their own tribe than their nation. But Theodore by setting up the Roman system with its grades of rank—the priest in the parish, the bishop in the diocese ruling over the priests, the archbishop in his province ruling over the bishops, and the

Theodore  
of Tarsus.  
Union.

Pope as the head of all—united the land into one.<sup>1</sup> When all met together in a national synod they no longer thought of themselves as men of Northumbria, Kent, or Wessex, but as members of a United Church.

If we look for the results of the conversion upon our country, the first is here. A united Church gave the example for a united people; union under one archbishop accustomed men to think of union under one king; if they were alike in religion, they might well be alike in law and government. And we shall see that this soon came to pass; the old petty kingdoms died out or were absorbed, until one kingdom—that of Wessex—became the kingdom of England.

A National Church an example of a United Nation.

The Church offered an example of union; it also offered an example of peace. Among the Saxons men had been chiefly thought of for their valour. Theirs was the rule of might; little was thought of right. Their system of justice was based on the ideas of private vengeance or of fines paid in compensation for wrongs done. When a murder, a theft, or some deed of violence had been committed, the accused person had to be produced by his kindred. If he did not appear, he was declared outlawed, and the injured man or his relations could exact what vengeance they pleased, if they found him. If he pleaded that he was innocent, he was required to support his oath by men who would swear to his being an honest man, and one to be believed. These were called *compurgators*. If he could not get sufficient compurgators, he had to go through the *ordeal*, an appeal to the judgment of Heaven. He put his arm into boiling water, or had to walk over red-hot ploughshares or carry a red-hot bar three paces. If the scars were not healed in three days he was judged guilty. In that event he was dealt with as if he had pleaded guilty; that is to say, he was fined according to his crime. Part went to the king, as a compensation for a breach of the king's peace; part went to the injured man, or, in the case of a murder, to his kindred. The amount of this fine partly depended on the gravity of the injury done, but partly also on the rank of the

Teaching and Example of the Church.

Ordeal.

<sup>1</sup> The work was not completed by Theodore. He, however, began it.



man injured. To kill a thegn was more heinous than to kill a ceorl, and therefore a higher *wergild* had to be paid.

Thus the Saxon conception of justice was bad. It encouraged private vengeance, which only leads to more violence and makes one crime produce many others; it has little idea of a trial, since by the ordeal it threw on Providence or chance the task of deciding guilt, a task which men can perform for themselves; by compurgation it favoured the strong and noble against the poor and simple, since a great man's oath outweighed the oaths of many small men; and, finally, it had practically no idea of a *crime* against the state.

The Church, however, held a loftier view about misdeeds than merely regarding them as wrongs to a person. They were more than wrongs, they were also *sins* on the part of the doer. Theodore and his parish clergy taught that such acts must not only be compensated by fines, but atoned for by repentance and penance; and the penances, consisting of fasting, pilgrimage, and assiduous prayer, acted as very real punishments. Till the penance was discharged the guilty man was outside the pale of the Church and its protection. Thus not only did the penitential system, by adding further punishment, check misdeeds and discourage habits of gluttony, drunkenness, and vice, which the Saxons had hitherto thought excusable or even praiseworthy, but it strengthened the idea that such wrongdoers were offenders against the whole body of the community. When this point is reached we get a much higher standard of justice, in which certain offences are treated as *crimes*, and dealt with by the state as offences against itself.

The Church, then, rebuked vice and punished ill-doers. But rebuke and punishment by themselves were not enough. Had the Church contented itself with merely commanding men to be good, its influence would have been slight. It was necessary to show the way; to teach not only by precept, but by example. This the monks and parish priests did admirably. Their own peaceful and simple lives brought men to see that doing their duty at home was better than seeking adventures abroad; that it was better to forgive an enemy than to overcome him; that a man should strive to be loved rather than feared.

To the Church, too, we owe the beginnings of our learning. The Abbey of Whitby found shelter for a cowherd who had become a monk. This man was Caedmon, the first English poet. His great religious poem seemed to those of his time to be sent direct from heaven. "Others after him strove to compose religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he learnt not the art of poetry from men, or of men, but from God." Bede, another monk—the "Venerable Bede" is the respectful title Bede, d. 753—that has been bestowed on him—is a type of the great teachers whom the Church gave us. "My constant pleasure", he says, "lay in learning, or teaching, or writing." At his school of Jarrow six hundred monks learned from him. He was our first historian; and, indeed, it is he who tells us almost all we know of this time. And yet more than this, he translated into English St. John's Gospel, devoting the last days of his life to the task. He was urged to rest from the work that was killing him, but he refused, saying: "I don't want my boys to read a lie, or to work to no purpose when I am gone." When the last chapter of the Gospel was finished the great scholar died.

Another, and a very different type, from among the men the Church gave us was Dunstan. He, too, was a monk; but while Bede was a scholar, Dunstan was not only a scholar but a statesman also. He was the adviser of two kings, and practically regent for a third; he went with the king on campaigns against the Danes; he kept the royal treasure. As in addition he was Archbishop of Canterbury, we can understand that he was much the most powerful man in the kingdom. He was the first man to be great both as a cleric and as a statesman. But there were many who followed in his steps. In fact, until the reign of Henry VIII, the greatest ministers of our kings were almost always clerics. There were many things that commended them. No cleric could be suspected of aiming at the throne; nor could he found a family, and therefore he was presumably less greedy for lands and honours than a baron, who could leave such things to his son. Again, clerics were far more able and enlightened than the ignorant warriors and nobles who formed the king's court,

The Church  
and Learning.  
Caedmon, 664.

Statesmen:  
Dunstan,  
Archbishop of  
Canterbury,  
960.

and they did a great work for England. As we shall see later, one of these Church-statesmen, Stephen Langton, had much to do with obtaining for us our Magna Carta.

The Church, then, gave us the beginnings of our national unity; it did much to give us peace at home, and a better sense of what was lawful and right; it gave us scholars, and it gave us statesmen.

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#### IV. The Early Kingdoms: Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex

The period of Saxon history which ends with the coming to the throne of the West Saxon King Egbert (802), who united all Saxon England under his sway, is sometimes called the period of the *Heptarchy*, the Rule of <sup>The Heptarchy.</sup> the Seven Kingdoms. Seven kingdoms may, indeed, be counted—Northumbria, Wessex, Mercia, Kent, Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia—though even here the description is not satisfactory, for Northumbria itself was made up of two kingdoms, Bernicia and Deira. But the term Heptarchy implies seven kingdoms independent of each other, whereas, in fact, these kingdoms were very rarely quite independent. As we shall see, sometimes one, sometimes another, had a sort of overlordship over the rest. A king who had this overlordship was often called a *Bretwalda*. Yet, again, this title must not be pressed too far. The name Bretwalda seems first to have been taken by Edwin of Northumbria to commemorate his victories over the Welsh. He wished to imitate the Roman rulers, and called himself by a name which translated the old title "Duke of the Britons".<sup>1</sup> Other kings took the name without as much reason as Edwin had, and later writers have applied it as a convenient name for the powerful monarchs whose overlordship was admitted by the other kingdoms. Yet when we read that Edwin of Northumbria was Bretwalda, we must not imagine that the other kingdoms

<sup>1</sup> This is not certain; some think it means "Broad-ruler".



were really subject to him, any more than when we speak of the Heptarchy we must think of them as being quite independent.

Just as the kingdom of Kent under Ethelbert was the first to accept Christianity, so it was the first to exercise an overlordship over the rest. Ethelbert's authority reached as far **Kent.** north as the Humber. He did not conquer the other kingdoms, at least there is no record of his warring against them, but they regarded him as their chief and fought under his banner. He was admitted to be the most important king in England.

The overlordship of Kent was, however, shortlived. It rose with Ethelbert, and fell at his death in 616. From that time the Kings of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex in succession were regarded as overlords. It is tempting to wonder why the kingdoms of Anglia, Essex, and Sussex never rose to this position, seeing that the south-eastern part of the country was richer and more fertile than the rest, and had been in Roman days more populous. The answer is probably this. When the Welsh were driven into the west, only the Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex, who still had to hold their borders against them, remained good fighting men. The rest, being less disturbed by wars, settled down to the arts of peace. They may have grown richer, but they grew weaker. The battle was not in those days to the wealthy, but to the strong.

Again, as Christianity passed from Kent to Northumbria, so also did the overlordship of England. Ethelric had formed **Northumbria,** Northumbria by uniting Bernicia (Lothian and 616-685. Northumberland) and Deira (Yorkshire and Durham) in 588. Ethelfrith, his son, had, as we have seen, won the battle of Chester in 613, and had driven thereby a wedge of Saxon power between the Welsh of Wales and Strathclyde. Great as Ethelfrith was, he was defeated and killed by a usurper, a son of the man whom Ethelric had driven from the throne of Deira when he added it to his own Bernician realm. Yet this usurper became even more powerful than Ethelfrith. He was Edwin the Bretwalda.

Part of Edwin's career is already familiar. We have seen that he married Ethelburga of Kent, and that Paulinus converted

him to Christianity. This, however, falls in the second half of his reign. In the ten years before his conversion he gathered such a power as never had been wielded by any man in England before him. He had driven the Picts north of the Forth, and, to overawe them, built the commanding fortress which still bears his name, Edinburgh<sup>1</sup>. He had driven the Strathclyde Welsh to the west of the Yorkshire hills, and had launched on the Irish Sea a fleet which won for him the Isle of Man and Anglesea, the latter again bearing a commemorative name, "the Isle of the Angles". A standard and a spear topped with a tuft of feathers, the old sign of Roman power, was carried before him. Secure towards the north and west, he turned southwards; Mercians and East Angles bowed before him; his marriage with Ethelburga won the alliance of Kent; the only kingdom that still resisted was Wessex. The West Saxons sent envoys to make terms. At the meeting, one of them, thinking to free his country by a treacherous stroke, rushed at Edwin to murder him; but Lilla, one of Edwin's thegns, threw himself in the way, and, by receiving the sword in his own body, saved his master. In the war that followed the West Saxons were beaten, and had, like the rest, to take Edwin as overlord.

Edwin,  
617-633.

That this great king had become a Christian no doubt helped the cause of Christianity in England, but his Christianity did not help Edwin. All who remained heathen were set against him, and when Edwin accepted a religion that preached peace rather than a sword, his foes thought he was growing weak and unwarlike. An alliance was formed against him by Penda, the heathen King of Mercia, who, calling in to his aid Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd (the Snowdonian district of Wales), overcame Edwin's army at Heathfield.<sup>2</sup> Edwin fell in the battle.

The period that follows is a long struggle between Northumbria and Mercia, in which the latter gradually triumphed. After the battle of Heathfield, Penda wrested the supremacy of East Anglia from the Northumbrians and added it to the kingdom which he had gradually got together in the Midlands, and so long as he was alive Northumbria found him a formidable enemy. Oswald, who succeeded to Edwin's throne

Rise of  
Mercia.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Edwin's burh.

<sup>2</sup> Hatfield in Yorkshire.

in 635, leagued himself with Wessex against the Mercian, but Penda beat them at Maserfield in 642. For some years the Northumbrian power was prostrated by a struggle between kings who represented the rival houses of Bernicia and Deira. Oswy at length united the two, and finally revenged the misfortunes of his house by overthrowing Penda on the River Winwed, near Leeds.

With Penda fell heathendom; but the cause of Mercia survived. Just as Northumbria had been weakened by being the one Christian country in the midst of heathen foes, so Mercia was strengthened by abandoning the old religion which had separated her from the rest. Three years after Penda's death, his son once more threw off the yoke of Northumbria, and Oswy could not subdue him. Indeed the days of Northumbrian greatness were drawing to an end. Yet the last days were almost the brightest. Egfrith, who came to the throne in 670, conquered the Strathclyde Welsh, and added Cumbria as far north as Carlisle to his dominions. He grasped, however, at a still wider power, and led an army north of the Forth. During his absence an uneasy dread lay on Northumbria. St. Cuthbert, Abbot of Lindisfarne, was at the time at Carlisle. He shared the anxiety of the people. "Let us watch and pray," said he to some questioner. The fears were justified. While St. Cuthbert was praying at Carlisle, Egfrith and his army were cut to pieces by the Picts in the battle of Nectansmere. With this defeat the Northumbrian power fell for ever.

Nectans-  
mere, 685.

For more than a hundred years Mercia held the overlordship which Northumbria had lost. She had, it is true, many struggles with Wessex, but on the whole kept the advantage. At first Ini, King of Wessex, seemed likely to unite and extend Wessex into a kingdom too strong for Mercia to overcome, but in 726, when Ini was absent on a pilgrimage to Rome, Ethelbald, King of Mercia, seized the chance to invade Wessex, and by 733 had subdued it. The Mercian overlordship lasted for twenty years, till the West Saxons rose and defeated Ethelbald at Burford. Under Ethelbald's successor, Offa, Mercian power rose to its zenith. He overcame Kent and Essex, advanced the Mercian frontier to the

Mercian  
supremacy.  
685-796.

Offa,  
757-96.



Thames, pushed back the Welsh, and built the great rampart, "Offa's dyke", from the Dee to the Wye, to confine them within narrower limits. He persuaded Pope Hadrian to make Lichfield the see of an archbishop, so that Mercian Christians should not be under the rule of Canterbury. He corresponded on terms of equality with the most powerful monarch of the time, the Emperor Charlemagne. Yet his power was no more secure than that of Edwin, or Oswy, or Egfrith. When he died, Mercian supremacy crumbled away.

The story of the rise and fall, first of Northumbria and then of Mercia, is apt to seem tiresome. After battles and conquests there is nothing permanent to show for it all. One fabric, laboriously raised, tumbles to the ground, and nothing is left but confused ruins. Then another is begun only to collapse like its predecessor. We shall now have to follow the building up of a third power, that of Wessex. This time, however, it is more interesting because it proved permanent.

We have seen from time to time a little of the early history of Wessex. The West Saxons were certainly the most powerful kingdom in the south. Twice they had seemed to be on the verge of great things, first when Ceawlin won the victory of Deorham, and again when Ini conquered Somerset, Sussex, and Kent, thus becoming master of all England south of the Thames. But Ceawlin was checked by quarrels at home, and the West Saxon power had been overshadowed by the growth of Northumbria, while Ini was compelled to yield to Ethelbald of Mercia. Offa's death, however, gave a fresh opportunity; and with the hour came the man.

Wessex.

Egbert,  
802-839.

Egbert had already made one attempt on the West Saxon throne, but the influence of Offa had been too strong for him. He had taken refuge with Charlemagne, and had no doubt learnt at that monarch's splendid court the value of a united realm, and something of the art of ruling one. In 802 the West Saxons offered him the crown. The growth of his power was rapid. He subdued the Welsh of Cornwall, defeated the Mercians at Ellandun in 825, tore from them the kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, and Essex, which they had held subject, and two years later, invading Mercia itself, made the Mercians accept him as overlord.

His name was now so great that Northumbria submitted to a mere threat. Thus before his death in 839, although he did not actually displace the Kings of Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia, he was ruler of the whole country.<sup>1</sup>

So far there is nothing to suggest to us that the overlordship of Wessex will differ from those of Mercia or Northumbria. We may expect to see it fall, as they fell. Indeed on Egbert's death we may fancy that we see the fall beginning: Wessex goes to one son, Ethelwulf; Kent, Essex, and Sussex are given to another son, Athelstan. Disunion appears close at hand. Yet there was a new factor in English politics. Efforts at union had hitherto failed, because so soon as one kingdom became great, it was the interest of the rest to pull it down. Such union as there was must be union of force, not of hearts. Ever since the Welsh had been tamed, England had lacked the strongest motive towards union, namely, the presence of a powerful foreign foe. In Egbert's reign this foreign foe was already thundering at the gates. England had to face the invasions of the Danes.

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## V. Alfred and the Danes

Traditionally we are accustomed to think of Alfred and the Danes together. The name of the great hero-king at once raises in our minds the memory of a desperate struggle between the English and the invading sea rovers. Yet we must be on our guard lest we make too much of this. The Danes had begun to harass England long before Alfred's day; and though Alfred certainly checked their conquests for a time, he did not in any sense end the struggle. His sons and grandsons had to carry on his work, and even after their time the trouble broke out afresh. Indeed for nearly two hundred years English history is

<sup>1</sup> The spread of Christianity over Saxon England and the changes of the overlordship follow nearly the same course. If on a map of England a "horse-shoe" line be drawn, starting in Kent and travelling through *Essex*, *East Anglia*, Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, back to *Sussex*, this traces the course of Christianity, save that Wessex was converted before Mercia; omitting the kingdoms in italics it also traces the "overlordship".

full of the Danes, plundering, fighting, conquering and being conquered, rebelling against their Saxon rulers, and at last reaching their final triumph when a Danish king, Canute, rules England. Of these two hundred years it is plain that the reign of Alfred can only occupy a small part. None the less, it is a distinguished part.

Again, though Alfred was great as a leader against the Danes, it is only a small part of his greatness. There were many stout warriors among the Saxon kings, but only one Alfred. Had he never fought a battle he would yet have deserved a place among the greatest rulers of the world. He was the first English king who gave up his whole life to the welfare of his country. Other kings had regarded their kingship largely as a position to be used for their own pleasure and ambition. Alfred treated his solely as a duty which he owed to his people. He was not content to be merely a king; he was a father to his fatherland, a servant to his own subjects.

Alfred's  
greatness.

Before Alfred could carry out any of his schemes of good government it was needful that the country should be at peace, and no peace was possible until the Danes were overcome. The Danes, then, were his first task.

Precisely the same cause which had brought the Saxons on the Britons was now driving the Danes on the Saxons. The Danes, as we are in the habit of calling them, did not come from Denmark alone, but from all North Germany, Scandinavia, and all the coasts of the North Sea. If we call them not Danes, but Northmen, we are reminded that they did not raid England only, but the north of France too, and gave their name to the province of Normandy. They went still farther afield, however. They made a settlement in South Italy, twice attacked Constantinople, conquered Iceland, sailed from there to Greenland, and even reached the coast of America centuries before Columbus. In this restless career of adventure, driven from their homes by the same pressure of westward-moving races which had urged the barbarians against the Roman Empire and the Saxons into Britain, we may find repeated the same stages of progress which had marked the Saxon invasion.

Danish  
invasion.



The first object was plunder; the second stage, settlement; the final stage, conquest.

The year 789 saw the first Danish raid into England; on the eastern coasts fell the earliest gusts of the coming storm; since the Danes were heathen they had no scruple in sacking the rich monasteries of Lindisfarne and Wearmouth. As time went on the raids became more numerous, the raiders more daring. Egbert was beaten in 828, but in 837 he won a victory at Hengist's Down. Yet one victory was of little use. In the course of the next three years every summer brought a fresh horde of plunderers, and London, Rochester, and Canterbury were all pillaged.

The middle of the ninth century saw the Danish invasions passing from the first to the second stage. In 851 some Danes, instead of returning home, wintered in Sheppey. This example was soon followed. In 866 an army, greater than any of its predecessors, landed in East Anglia. The next year it ravaged Northumbria; then it advanced into Mercia; checked there, it returned to East Anglia, and slew King Edmund, whose name is commemorated in Bury St. Edmunds. The year 871 saw it again push southwards into Wessex. If Wessex fell, the Danes would be indeed masters of England.

It was this crisis that Alfred had to face. His grandfather, Egbert, had died in 839, leaving a son, Ethelwulf, who had reigned till 858. He left behind him four sons, of whom Alfred was the youngest. By 866 the two elder ones had passed away, and the third, Ethelred, had succeeded to the throne. Aided by Alfred, he prepared to drive back the invaders.

This was no easy task. Men who had the daring to face the storms of the North Sea, and even to round the wild western coasts of Iceland in their low, undecked vessels driven by oars, were not likely to want courage on land. Further, the Danes, as soldiers, had great military and strategical advantages. The mail-shirt (byrnie) was common with them, but the levies of the English "fyrd" had no defensive armour. Being raiders, they had no towns, farms, wives, and children to protect. Their usual plan was to advance with their ships

as far as possible up the rivers. When the ships could go no farther, they were drawn ashore and protected with a stockade. The main body of the force swept together all the horses they could get, and, once "a-horsed", travelled over the country, burning and plundering, so fast that the slow-moving "fyrd" could not come up with them.<sup>1</sup> Plunder being their main object, the Danes avoided a battle when they could. They rarely made an attack, but when threatened drew into a stockade, and, standing shoulder to shoulder, formed the "shield wall", which was hard to break through. The heavy Danish axe, five feet long and wielded in both hands, was a terrible weapon at close quarters. And, finally, the Danes never knew when they were beaten. They were never more dangerous than when the day seemed lost. Thus in 868 they were driven headlong into York by Osbert and Ella, but rallied among the houses, and slew both kings. And this is no isolated example; the same rallying power was displayed over and over again.

Ethelred and Alfred did not make a promising beginning. They tried to storm the Danish camp situated in the tongue of land between the Kennet and Thames, near Reading. The assault failed, and though the Danes, being emboldened by success to abandon their usual tactics and risk a battle in the open, were routed by Alfred at Ashdown, yet the English lost so many men that they were beaten at Basing, and again at Marden in Wiltshire, in which latter fight Ethelred was killed. He left children, but Alfred was chosen to succeed him. It was no time for a child on the throne. Alfred tried his luck once again at Wilton, but although his men at first forced the Danes back, yet they rallied and once more were victorious.

Battles of  
Ashdown  
and Marden.

This was desperate fighting. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says, "Nine battles were fought this year south of the Thames", and the balance of victories did not rest with Alfred. But though the English did not win the battles, yet they won the campaign, for in the next year the Danes, having no stomach

<sup>1</sup> When the "fyrd" turned out in really large numbers it was almost certainly on foot. But there is good ground for thinking that in small bodies the fyrd moved "a horsed", just as the Danes did. Neither side, of course, fought mounted.

for more of such bloody work, withdrew eastward and northward to regions where they met less stout foemen, and Alfred had a little breathing space.

In 877 the storm gathered afresh. In the depths of winter Guthrum and Hubba declared war. Guthrum swooped down on Alfred's royal town of Chippenham before Alfred could gather a force. The king himself, almost without followers, had to take refuge in the isle of Athelney, a marshy stronghold protected by the waters of the Tone and Parret. Never before or after were his fortunes at so low an ebb, but he did not despair. By degrees men joined him. He fell on the Danes at Ethandun (Edington), and drove them in headlong flight to their stockade. Here they were surrounded and starved into submission.

**Battle of  
Ethandun,  
878.**

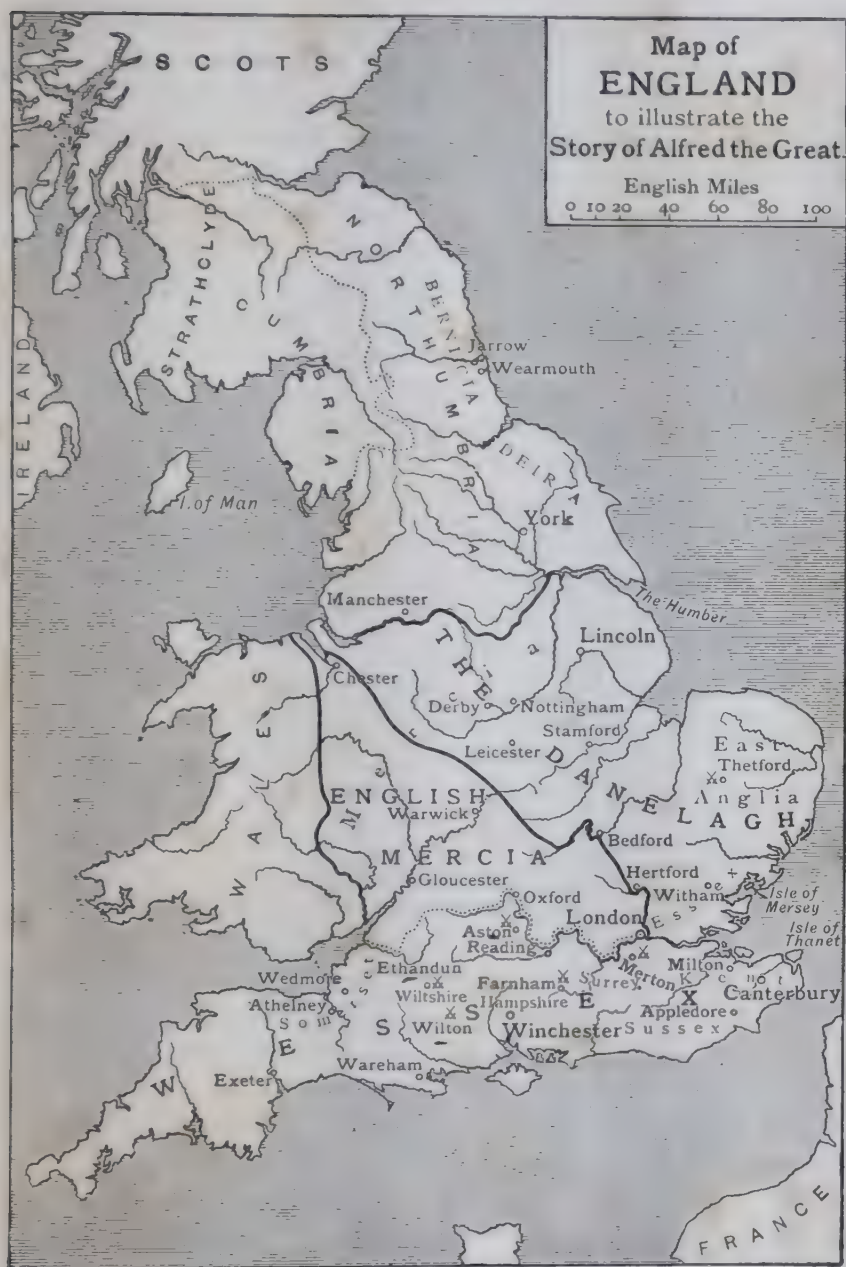
It would, no doubt, have been a more effective blow had the stockade at Chippenham been stormed. A crushing defeat might have struck such terror into the Danish counsels that they might well have judged it wise to leave Alfred alone for the future. But the risk of defeat was great, and it was not Alfred's policy. He no longer hoped to clear the Danes out from England altogether. To carry on war to the death might be attractive to a king, thirty years old, at the head of a victorious army. But Alfred never made war for his own glory. He was a statesman who looked to the good of his people. So he put aside glittering dreams of conquest, and was ready to allow the Danes to settle down in the north and east, provided they would be quiet neighbours. This is clear from the terms which he made with Guthrum.

The first condition was that Guthrum and his men should become Christians. Thus one great hindrance in the way of a peaceful union was removed; and, as the Danes were of much the same race as the English, spoke a kindred language, and had very similar institutions, there was no race-hatred between the two, such as had prevented the Saxons and Britons from living together in amity. The Saxon had hated the Dane, not because he was a Dane, but because he plundered and robbed. When he gave up these habits he could be tolerated.

**Treaty of  
Wedmore.**

The line of division settled in the Treaty of Wedmore was





the Watling Street; but a few years later Alfred got a better frontier. Henceforth the line ran up the estuary of the Thames to the Lea, along that river to Hertford and across to Bedford, then followed the Ouse till it struck the Watling Street, and from there to Chester. Roughly speaking, the north and east lay in Guthrum's hands; the south and west remained to Alfred. He lost in the extent of his territory, but the hold of Wessex over Northumbria and Anglia had not been firm. In the end he was stronger in a more concentrated kingdom, and he retained London and most of the larger towns.

The Treaty of Wedmore freed Alfred from Guthrum, but at any moment a fresh band of marauders might come. To guard against this danger was Alfred's next care. He improved his Alfred's army. army by increasing the number of the thegns, making all holders of five hides of land "take up their thegn-hood", and even allowing the man with less land to become a thegn, if he had proper arms and mail armour. As the thegn was bound to follow the king for the whole course of the war,<sup>1</sup> the most effective part of the army was strengthened. Further, Alfred arranged that the fyrd should be divided into three parts, each of which would serve for a month at a time, thus securing a more permanent force from this somewhat disorderly and untrained body. He also created "burhs", or fortified posts, on the Danish frontier for checking raiders. But, best of all, he was the first to see that England's safety lay in a fleet: the best way to meet the Danes was to fight them at sea. He built, as the Alfred's fleet. *Chronicle* tells us, "long ships that were full nigh twice as long as the others; some had sixty oars,<sup>2</sup> some more; they were both swifter and steadier than the others". It is somewhat curious that though the English had themselves in early days been sea rovers, yet they had lost their taste for the sea, and Alfred had at first to employ Frisians to man his ships. Soon, however, the English became good seamen, and the fleet which Alfred created and his descendants enlarged, became England's best safeguard.

<sup>1</sup> As contrasted with the fyrd, whose members were always anxious to return to the duties of their farms.

<sup>2</sup> The usual Danish ship had thirty-two oars.

The wisdom of these precautions was shown when, at the end of his reign, Alfred had to meet a fresh invasion of Danes led by Hastings, "the worst man that ever was born". Alfred's new army was able to storm the Danish camp on the Lea, to shatter another force at Buttington in Montgomery, and finally by a great stroke to blockade and capture the Danish fleet in a narrow part of the river Lea. In 897 the Danes gave up the game and made off to join their kinsmen in Normandy, where we shall hear of them again. In England, for the present, they had found that, as a Norse poet sang:

"They got hard blows instead of shillings,  
And the axe's weight instead of tribute",

and they judged it best to leave Alfred alone.

Alfred deserves to be remembered for what he did to keep his realm safe, yet no less honour is due for what he did to make it well governed. He set in order the laws, and took such good care that the reeves and aldermen should enforce them, that in later days when troubles came again men longed for the "laws of King Alfred". From his youth up he had been a scholar, always anxious to learn, and ready to teach. It was his wish that every freeborn youth "should abide at his book till he can well understand English writing". That his people should have books to read in English, he translated from the Latin not only books on religion—the *Consolation* of Boethius and the *Pastoral* of Pope Gregory—but also books on history and geography, Bede's *History of the Church* and Orosius' *History and Geography*. At times, too, he did more than translate; he added to the books whatever seemed interesting to himself. Thus he put into Orosius' book the accounts of two voyages northwards to the White Sea and eastwards along the Baltic, made by Othere and Wulfstan, whom Alfred had himself sent out. Even more valuable than his translations was the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which Alfred caused to be written and perhaps himself helped to write. This chronicle, which begins its story with the coming of the English, and was continued year by year from Alfred's time, is the best record we have for what happened before the Norman Conquest; it is

Policy at home.

Learning.



## 34 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE SAXONS

the oldest history in its own tongue possessed by any nation in Europe; and by causing it to be written Alfred became the father of English prose, just as Caedmon had been the father of English poetry.

A king who was so fond of learning was sure to attract scholars to his court. Nor did Alfred neglect the Church. The plunderings of the Danes had left churches in ruins and monasteries desolate. He gave largely from his own income to rebuild them; he even went further, setting up an abbey for monks at Athelney to commemorate God's mercies to him there, and another religious house for nuns at Shaftesbury. His own daughter did not disdain to be Head of this. Further, the churchmen themselves were in nearly as evil plight as the churches. At the beginning of his reign Alfred tells us that even south of the Humber there were "few priests who could render his service-book into English", while in the north the state of the church was still worse. Thanks to Alfred's efforts this ignorance was amended. He took care to choose good bishops and trusted them to make the lower clergy do their duty.

However we look at Alfred, whether as a warrior, as a statesman, as a lawgiver, as a scholar, as a reformer, he appears equally great. Yet with all his greatness he kept all through his life the nature of a modest and simple man. "I desire," said he in his latest days, "to leave to them that come after me a remembrance of me in good works. So long as I have lived I have striven to live worthily." None can doubt that the task which this great king set himself was nobly done.

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## VI. The Golden Age of the Saxons

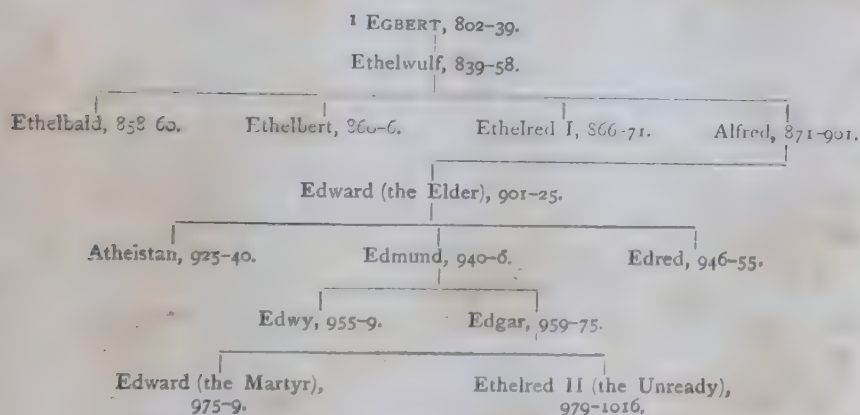
Alfred died in 901; Ethelred II, whose reign marks the downfall of all that Alfred had done, came to the throne in 979. This chapter passes in review the seventy-eight years that elapse between the two kings each justly named, the one "the Great", the other "the Unready", or "Redeless".

It is not altogether easy to find any one distinguishing mark of the period; yet if we take it down to 975 we may fairly call it "Three Generations of Strong Kings", for, reckoning the one son, three grandsons and two great-grandsons<sup>1</sup> sprung from Alfred, only one (Edwy) shows no good qualities as a ruler. We may remark further that these three generations all carry on Alfred's work. They do not attempt to extirpate the Danes, but they gradually bring them under their sway, so that the two races begin to join into one, and the house of Wessex again becomes supreme over all England. Finally, in the latter part of the period we shall notice a great increase in the political power of the Church; we shall see, too, the first of that long line of ecclesiastical statesmen who appear and reappear for many centuries in English history.

With these somewhat slender threads to join a series of events which are naturally rather disconnected we may bind together the story of Alfred's descendants.

Edward the Elder shone chiefly as a warrior. The title which he took—"King of the English" instead of "King of the West Saxons"—indicates his life's work. He set himself to recover the Danelaw, that district which his father had been forced to give up. The task was easier than it might seem, since the Danes of the Danelaw were not united under one ruler. None the less Edward had to proceed with caution. Aided by his warlike sister, Ethelfleda, who ruled the Midlands for him under the title of the

Edward the Elder, 901-25.



## 36 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE SAXONS

"Lady of the Mercians", he first completed the series of fortified posts which Alfred had begun. Then moving over the border he attacked the group of Danish towns on the Upper Ouse. One by one, Bedford, Huntingdon, Northampton, Cambridge, yielded to him. Ethelfleda led an army against the Five Danish Boroughs in the valley of the Trent, and captured Derby and Leicester. She died in 918, but Edward carried on the work. At length, in 925, when he was setting out on a final invasion of the north, he was met by envoys from all the northern powers, from the Danes of Northumbria, the Welsh of Strathclyde, the Angles of Bernicia, and even Constantine, King of the Scots, who offered submission and swore to take him to "father and lord". Edward accepted their submission, though it must have been as evident to him as it is to modern eyes that the supremacy over so distant a person as the King of Scots could not have been very secure. Scanty foundation as it was, however, we shall see much built on it, by another Edward, even greater than his namesake Edward the Elder.

That the submission was merely nominal became clear enough in the reign of Edward's son, Athelstan. Athelstan first married **Athelstan,** his sister to Sigtric, Danish King of Northumbria, 925-40. but on the death of that king did not hesitate to drive out his kinsman's sons and seize the kingdom for himself. Conduct of this kind made the other northerners uneasy. Constantine gave help to Sigtric's sons, and got together a vast league against Athelstan. Danes of Northumbria, and Welsh of Strathclyde, joined him. All who had taken Edward to "father and lord" were now ready to war against Athelstan. Even Danes from Ireland under King Anlaf came over to help their kinsmen. Athelstan, however, was a match for them all. He met the allies at Brunanburgh,<sup>1</sup> and, in the greatest battle yet seen in England, utterly defeated them. **Battle of Brunanburgh,** 937. The fight lasted all day, a series of desperate assaults by the Saxons on the "burh" or earthwork in which the invaders had fortified themselves. The old triumph song tells us:

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps at Bourne in Lincolnshire.



Here gat King Athelstan  
 And eke his brother  
 Eadmund Atheling  
 Life long glory  
 At swords edge  
 Round Brunanburh  
 Board-wall they cleft  
 War-lindens hewed  
 Sithen sun up  
 Till the bright being  
 Sank to his settle.

Anlaf fled back to Ireland with but a handful of men. Constantine "the hoary war-man" left his eldest son dead on the field. Athelstan's triumph was complete.

His brother Edmund, who succeeded him in 940, had, however, again to fight for his power in the north. It was, in fact, the regular thing that the Danes should revolt with each new ruler and try his mettle. Edmund was no less sturdy than Athelstan. He reduced the rebels, and to punish the King of Strathclyde, who had helped them, he conquered that kingdom and granted it to Malcolm, King of Scots. This "grant" is another historical molehill which a later age came to regard as a mountain. Together with Constantine's submission to Edward the Elder, this forms one ground of the claim to the overlordship of Scotland which Edward I put forward.

Edmund had reigned but six years when he was murdered by an outlaw whom he was endeavouring to drag from his banqueting-hall. His younger brother, Edred, had also a short, but not an inglorious reign. Three things about him deserve note. First, as was always the case when a brother succeeded in place of the late king's young son, the crown was given to him by a decision of the Witan: but in this particular Witan sat, not only Englishmen, but Danes and Welshmen. The complete union of England was apparently not far off, when men of three races could meet in one assembly to choose their ruler. Secondly, after suppressing the usual rebellion in Northumbria, Edred divided it, not into shires, which would have been ruled by aldermen, but into two huge earldoms.

Edmund,  
940-6.

Edred,  
946-55.

## 38 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE SAXONS

This creation of "earls"<sup>1</sup> with wide deminions was a dangerous policy, from which were to come serious troubles in the future. And thirdly, Edred's friend was the great churchman, Dunstan.

Although Dunstan had been brought up in the abbey of Glastonbury, he had no wish at first to enter the Church. He came to seek his fortune at King Athelstan's court.

Dunstan. The other courtiers were jealous of his learning or annoyed by his wit, and they resolved to make him ridiculous. As he was riding across a marsh they threw him from his horse and rolled him in the mire. Dunstan left the court in disgust, fell sick of a fever, and when he recovered became a monk. Athelstan, sorry for his courtiers' rudeness, recalled him to court. Edmund again dismissed him, but two days later changed his mind. The reason is given us in a well-known story. Edmund was hunting near Cheddar; the chase swept to the edge of Cheddar cliffs; stag and hounds went headlong over, and the king seemed unable to check his horse. In the agony of the moment he vowed to make amends to Dunstan if he was saved, and the horse just pulled up on the edge. In gratitude for his escape Edmund made Dunstan Abbot of Glastonbury. Edred took him for his chief adviser.

Dunstan had won the confidence of one king, but this was no guarantee that he would be equally favoured by the next.

Edwy, 955-9. He was again to experience the uncertainty of fortune. Edwy, who succeeded Edred, fell into the hands of the party who hated the monks. Consequently he soon quarrelled with Dunstan. Dunstan rebuked him for affronting all the nobles of his court by leaving the table at his coronation-feast, and even led him back by the hand like a sulky boy. Edwy retorted by driving Dunstan into exile. This angered all the monkish party, but they were still more set against the king for marrying a wife who was within the "prohibited degrees" in relationship. Archbishop Odo declared it no marriage; all Edwy's most powerful subjects revolted, and set up his brother Edgar as king. Edwy was left merely the part of England that lay south of the Thames. It seemed that England might be split up once again, but for-

<sup>1</sup> Danish, *jarl*.

unately Edwy's death put an end to the difficulty. The whole realm came under Edgar's allegiance.

This prince is aptly called the "Peaceful". While Edgar was on the throne, the long term of Saxon prosperity that had had its spring with Alfred, and its summer under Edward and Athelstan, remained unbroken. It was indeed drawing to an end; Edgar's reign wore the peacefulness of an autumn, so calm and fair that it leads men to forget how soon it must pass away. Since Edgar's first act was to recall Dunstan, and as Dunstan remained his trusted minister throughout, we may find in the events of the reign the best example of Dunstan's policy.

Dunstan, we have seen, was a monk; Edgar made him Archbishop of Canterbury. Thus the first field for his activity lay in Church affairs. It happened that at this time there was a great revival in monastic affairs going on on the Continent. The Benedictine monks of Clugny, who led stern, hard, self-sacrificing lives, were everywhere taken as models. In one respect the secular clergy were not doing what the Church expected them to do. It was thought right that they should remain, like the monks, unmarried. At this time, however, this rule was badly kept. Many of the seculars had wives, and this gave great offence. Dunstan did his best to make the seculars remain unmarried, but he was not altogether successful. Under these circumstances it became the fashion to think a great deal of monks and less of the secular<sup>1</sup> clergy. This showed itself not only in the revival of old monasteries and the setting up of new ones, but also in the practice of turning out the seculars from positions of dignity and putting monks in their places. Thus the secular canons of the Cathedral of Winchester were turned out, and monks installed instead of them. The same thing was done at Worcester. No doubt, in some respects, the change was for the better; the monks led stricter lives, and they were more learned. But it raised a great jealousy between regulars and seculars. Although Dunstan, as head of the Church, may be said to have approved of those changes

<sup>1</sup> Monks, friars, and others who lived under a rule like that of St. Benedict, or in later days like those of St. Francis or St. Dominic, were called "regulars" (Lat. *regula*). The rest of the clergy were called "seculars".



which some of his bishops made, he did not make them in his own see. Though a monk, he was not an enthusiastic monk. He was not by nature either narrow or ascetic. The real reform that he was anxious for was that the clergy should be better educated.

It would be a mistake to look on Dunstan merely as a churchman. He was more than that. He was a great statesman. To him we may attribute the wise policy by which Edgar made friends of the Danes settled in England, making some aldermen, others bishops, and admitting many to his Witan. He also continued to keep on good terms with the kings of the Scots. Just as Edmund had handed over Strathclyde to Malcolm, so Edgar, we are told, gave Lothian to Kenneth. No doubt his powers over Lothian were very slight, and it was wise to yield gracefully what was not worth the trouble of keeping; but it is a form of wisdom which ministers and kings do not always show.

Though we may give Dunstan the credit of much that was done in Edgar's reign, yet the king showed himself a capable ruler. He issued improved laws, and travelled frequently over his realm to see that they were kept. More than that, he made the inhabitants of each "hundred" responsible for any misdeeds committed there. He enlarged the fleet, and himself made frequent voyages with it. And even if we distrust the old story that he was rowed across the Dee by six vassal-kings, yet none the less we may find a truth expressed in it. It is a picturesque way of saying that he was a prosperous and powerful monarch, and there was none found in Britain to rival his greatness.

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## VII. The Saxon Downfall

From Egoert to Edgar may be called the Golden Age of Saxon history. Kings and people alike are vigorous: enemies abroad are beaten off, rebellions at home crushed, law and justice enforced, learning encouraged. We have likened Edgar's reign to a fine autumn: we may go

further, and say that after him came down winter fierce and stormy. In the next ninety years, from the reign of Edward the Martyr till the death of Harold (975-1066), Saxon England went from one calamity to another. The kingdom could not even preserve itself from foreign conquest; we shall see a time of Danish attack ending in a Danish monarch on the throne, and then a time of Norman interference ending in the Norman Conquest. It will be convenient to divide the whole period into two parts corresponding to these two foreign influences, but through the whole we can trace in many of the chief men a decay of the old Saxon valour and self-reliance, and a new growth of indecision, discontent, treachery, that gave the foreigner his opportunity. There are brilliant exceptions: Edmund Ironside and Harold must not be forgotten. But fate was unkind enough to cut off both of them before they could do more than show their budding promise, while it left the incapable Ethelred and the feeble Edward the Confessor ample leisure to reap the whole harvest of their own incapacity.

The grouping of the events of this time shows a certain symmetry which it is well to bear in mind. From the accession of Ethelred the Unready to the Norman Conquest is a period of eighty-seven years. The middle part of it (1017-1042) is occupied with the Danish kings on the throne (Canute and his sons); the beginning part and the end part are covered by Saxon kings. Further, the beginning and end parts have a strong resemblance. Each period starts with a *long* reign of a *feeble* king followed by a very *short* reign of a *vigorous* king; each alike ends in a *foreign* conquest.<sup>1</sup>

1 PERIOD I (Saxon kings):		PERIOD II (Saxon kings):	
Long reign of <i>Ethelred the Unready</i> , 978-1016.	} Ending in Danish conquest and Danish kings, 1017-1042.	Long reign of <i>Edward the Confessor</i> , 1042- 1066.	} Ending in Norman conquest, 1066, and Norman kings.
Short reign of <i>Edmund Ironside</i> , 1016-1017.		Short reign of <i>Harold</i> , 1066.	

(975-1042)

## 1. The Danish Conquest of England

The story of the Saxon downfall opens ominously with murder. The young King Edward, riding past his stepmother's castle at Corfe, halted at the door and asked for a cup of wine. The treacherous queen brought it herself, and while the king was drinking it made one of her men stab him in the back, that her own son, Ethelred, might get the throne. For eight-and-thirty years England was to regret that deed, for Ethelred's reign proved one of the worst in her history.

Ethelred's name of the Unready or Redeless—that is to say, “the Man of Ill Counsel”—fitly describes him. He was selfish, idle, weak. He had not the vigour to control the

Ethelred the  
“Unready”,  
978-1016.

great earls and ealdormen in whose hands a strong king like Edgar had been able safely to leave so much of the government of the country. Instead of being useful servants of the state, these men became jealous and quarrelsome, struggling for their own power, and neglecting their duties. Upon an England in the hands of an incapable king and disloyal officials down swooped the Danes; and by this time the Danes were even more formidable than they had been in Alfred's reign. Norway and Denmark were now each of them kingdoms. The invaders were no longer plunderers, but trained warriors, obeying the commands of a king who, being sure of help from a mass of his kinsmen already settled in the country, aimed at nothing less than a complete conquest.

England's need was desperate: yet never was she left so utterly without help by her king and leaders. There was only one remedy; it was to fight, and fight hard. Yet when the invaders came they found England a prey, for, as the *Chronicle* says, “no shire would help other”. Then, by the advice of Sigiric, who had succeeded Dunstan, Ethelred reversed Alfred's plan of dealing with Danes: instead of hard blows the miserable man gave them shillings; he tried to buy them off with the Danegeld, a tax which he made his luckless subjects pay. This contemptible policy, of course, only put off

Saxon  
division.

Danegeld.



the evil day to a still worse to-morrow. The Danes, paid once, came back again and again for more, and they brought fresh swarms with them. Danegeld, first imposed in 991, was taken again in 994, in 1002, and in 1011. As Ethelred's Witan approved of the tax, it is plain that it was not the king alone who had fallen from the valour of the old days. When we read of one army "that it was the leaders first who began the flight"; of another, "when they were east, then men held our force west; and when they were south, then was our force taken north"; of another, "through something was flight ever resolved upon, and so the enemy ever had the victory"; or, again, that the king's most trusted alderman, Edric, betrayed his plans to the enemy; or, again, that after more than twenty years' harrying, the Witan had no more practical advice to recommend than a three days' fast and a daily chanting of the third psalm, "in order that God may grant us that we overcome our foes"; and, finally, that Ethelred himself would never risk his own person in a battle-field,—we feel that England has come on evil days.

Unfortunately, Ethelred's feebleness was not the worst of him: having by one act brought the Danes into England, he made them his lasting foes by another. He had recourse to treachery. Suddenly, in a time of truce, when he had got rid of the Norwegians by a treaty with their king, Olaf, and pacified the Normans by a marriage with Emma, the sister of their duke, he caused all the Danes on whom he could lay hands to be murdered. This "Massacre of St. Brice's Day" drew down on him the whole might of Denmark, for among the victims so slain were the sister of Sweyn, King of Denmark, and her husband.

Treachery.  
The Massacre  
of St. Brice.

Ethelred, like all weak kings, was a prey to bad favourites. He chose as his friend Edric, Earl of Mercia, and married him to his sister Edith. Edric may at the outset have meant to act with vigour against the Danes, but he turned out a very prince of traitors. His nickname of Streona, "the Grasper", shows that his guiding star was avarice and selfishness. He soon appeared in his true colours. His rivals at home he got rid of by murder, and he was perfectly ready to betray his country to the enemy. In 1013 Sweyn invaded England in

Edric Streona.

person: there was nothing to stop him; he swept through Northumbria, the Midlands, the west. Edric betrayed his master and persuaded the Witan to offer Sweyn the throne. London alone stoutly held out for Ethelred, till it heard that the miserable man had deserted his post and fled to Normandy. He came back to England after Sweyn's death, but two years later died himself. The Roman Church placed him among the saints. He was indeed a good friend to the Church, and his foes the Danes were heathen, but the patron of Edric and the author of the massacre of St. Brice's Day was scarcely worthy of a place in such dignified company.

After his death the greater part of England, being in Danish hands, acknowledged Sweyn's son, Canute, as king. There was one honourable exception. London held true to the line of Alfred, and chose Ethelred's son, Edmund.

Edmund, who gained by his bravery the name of "Iron-side", was of very different mould from his feeble father. He gathered an army, and twice fought with Canute's men at Penselwood and Sherston. Neither battle was decisive, but gathering fresh forces Edmund drove the Danes off London and won a victory at Brentford; a fourth hurled a number of them into the isle of Sheppey; these successes brought the traitor Edric over again to Edmund's side to be a fresh curse to his race, for in the fifth fight, when Edmund was engaged against the whole weight of Canute's forces at Assandun (Ashington in Essex), the day was lost only because Edric again deserted on the battlefield and went over once more to the Danes. Not content with this, a year later he got Edmund murdered, and in despair the nation took the Dane, Canute, as King. There is a certain just retribution in the fact that one of the first things Canute did was to have Edric put to death.

Canute, though a foreign conqueror, was a good king. He was, of course, infinitely more powerful than any king of the house of Wessex, for England was merely a province in his dominions. The King of Scots admitted him as his overlord. He was also King of Denmark, and in 1028 he subdued Norway, so that he seemed to be on the way to

Edmund  
Ironside,  
1016-7.

Canute,  
1017-35.

become an emperor of the north, a northern Charlemagne. But his might gave England that peace of which she stood sorely in need. War came to an end with the triumph of the enemy, and the enemy turned into a good friend. No rebellions broke the serenity of his reign. Towns grew rich and prosperous, for the Danes were great traders, and Canute's wide possessions gave merchants new chances for trade. He ruled sternly but fairly. He married Ethelred's widow, and so joined himself to the old royal family. He employed Danes and English alike; the Earls of Northumbria and East Anglia were Danes, those of Mercia and Wessex were Englishmen. The name of the latter officer, Godwin, we shall have occasion to remember. Canute felt so certain of the loyalty of his new subjects that he was able to send home all his Danish army, save only a small bodyguard of "house-carles", and even this consisted in part of Englishmen. This shows that he was loved, just as the old story of his rebuke to the flattering courtiers, who urged him to forbid the tide to come any farther, shows that he had a reputation for wisdom.

Canute's eldest son succeeded him in Norway. The two others, Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, divided England, the north obeying Harold, Wessex and the south Hardicanute. The latter spent most of his time in Denmark, so that the chief power fell into the hands of his mother, Emma, and as Hardicanute tarried long in Denmark the whole realm came into Harold's hands; but Harold dying in 1040, Hardicanute became king. He in his turn did not survive long, and with him the Danish dominion in England came to an end.<sup>1</sup>

Canute's sons:  
Harold and  
Hardicanute,  
1035-42.

## 2. Edward the Confessor and the Normans

When Hardicanute died the Witan had to choose a fresh king. They went back to the old West Saxon house, and chose Edward, second son of Ethelred

Edward the Confessor, 1042-66.

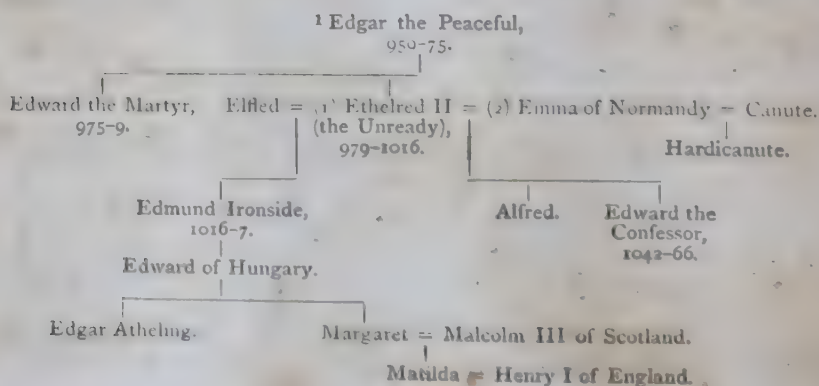
<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to speculate what would have been the history of England had Canute's descendants been "three generations of strong kings" — as Alfred's were.



the Unready.<sup>1</sup> Since this king's reign saw the rise of Norman influence in England, our first task is to trace the chief links that were drawing England and Normandy into closer connection.

The Normans were in origin Northmen, just as were the Danes who had so long harassed England. For many years they had raided the north of France under the leadership of Rolf the Ganger. In 913 the French King, Charles the Simple, had "granted" to the Danish leader the land which he could not keep. Thus began the line of the great Dukes of Normandy. Once settled in France the Northmen soon grew very different from their Danish kin. They began to use the French tongue and French customs, and became much more polished and civilized. It has always been a curious mark of the Northmen that wherever they went, when once fighting was over, they were ready to adopt the customs and generally the language of the place, and thus got on well with the original inhabitants. Though by nature rough and wild, they could, it seemed, put on any civilization, as it were a garment.

Northman in Normandy would naturally be ready to help Northman in England, and we have seen that the Danes often used Normandy as a base from which to attack, or as a shelter when beaten. But the earliest connection between England and the Norman house was made when Ethelred married Emma, daughter of Richard I of Normandy. A Norman queen is the first link in the chain of events that leads, some sixty years later, to a Norman



king. Emma's influence, however, went over to the Danish side. After Ethelred's death she married the Dane, Canute, and devoted herself to placing her Danish son, Hardicanute, on the throne. But her second son by her first husband was destined to draw still closer the bond between England and Normandy.

This second son, Edward the Confessor, was indeed more of a Norman than an Englishman. He came to the throne about five-and-thirty years old. At least twenty-five years of his life had been spent continuously in Normandy. Norman speech was at least as familiar to him as English. All his friends and habits were Norman. England knew nothing of him; and he knew nothing either of English statesmen or English ways. Above all he favoured churchmen. When he became king he wanted to surround himself with his Norman friends, and to raise them to posts of honour. Thus Robert, Abbot of Jumièges, who, we are told, was trusted by the king "as no other man was trusted", became successively Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury; another Norman followed him in the see of London; a third, the king's nephew, was Earl of Hereford; another, Richard Scrob, was the first to make the English acquainted with a Norman novelty which was to be the source of much suffering in the days to come: he built the first castle in England. All this of course was unpopular. Two parties arose: one the king's friends, Normans and their followers; the other the national or Saxon party. At the head of this we find Edward's opponent, Godwin. Edward, indeed, owed Godwin an old grudge. In Harold Harefoot's reign Edward's elder brother, Alfred, had landed to try to seize the throne. Godwin had been sent against him. Since he was Harefoot's officer Godwin was only doing his duty in capturing Alfred. He did his duty, but certainly in a most treacherous way. He met Alfred, pretended to join his side, and then made him and his followers prisoners while they were in their beds. Harold Harefoot caused Alfred to be put to death by thrusting out his eyes. Edward could hardly forgive Godwin for his share in this brutality.

Edward the Confessor, Norman in tastes.

Thus the history of England from the accession of Edward

the Confessor to the Norman Conquest is a struggle on the part of Godwin and his sons, Harold at the head of them, to maintain their power against the king and his Norman friends. Like all periods where a family is of great importance the story is confusing, because it demands a knowledge of relationships. It somewhat resembles the early part of the Wars of the Roses, save that there is no fighting. Edward the Confessor is not unlike Henry VI either in position or character. Just as in Henry VI's reign we hear little of the king, and much of Richard of York, Warwick, Salisbury, and Somerset, so here there will be much to say of Godwin, Harold, Tostig, and William of Normandy, while Edward the Confessor plays a very small part.

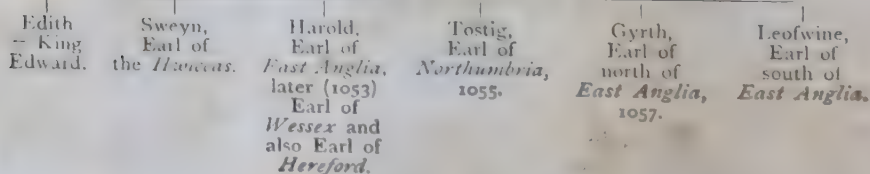
Godwin, leader  
of the English  
party.

At first Godwin's position was enormously strong. He himself was Earl of Wessex; his eldest son, Sweyn, was Earl of the Hwiccas, covering the counties of Oxford, Gloucester, Hereford, Berkshire, and Somerset; his second son, Harold, was Earl of East Anglia, which included not only the East Anglia of our day, but Cambridge, Huntingdon, and Essex as well; a nephew, Beorn, held an earldom covering Dorset and part of Wilts. To crown all, Godwin's daughter, Edith, was Edward's wife. There was no one to equal the family in power.<sup>1</sup> Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and Siward, Earl of Northumbria, could scarcely be called rivals.

Family  
influence  
of Godwin.

By degrees this power began to break up. The king disliked it. His Norman friends tried to thwart Godwin whenever they could. Godwin's eldest son, Sweyn, behaved badly. He fell in love with an abbess, and carried her off. He was outlawed, and his possessions shared between Harold and Beorn. Three years later he came to the English coast, invited Beorn on board his ship, and had him murdered. Godwin's influence was strong

<sup>1</sup> Godwin, Earl of *Wessex*, 1053.





enough to get him forgiven after this monstrous offence, but men were offended. Their confidence in Godwin was shaken. His enemies looked out for a chance to overthrow him.

The chance was not long in coming. The king's brother-in-law, Eustace of Boulogne, crossed over from France to see him. On his way back his followers tried to quarter themselves by force on the townsmen of Dover. One man refused to receive these unwelcome guests.

Quarrel with  
Eustace of  
Boulogne.

Blows were struck, a riot began, and seven of the Frenchmen were killed. Eustace complained to the king, and Edward ordered Godwin to ravage the town as a punishment. Godwin, however, had the good English notion that trial should come before punishment. The men of Dover had not been heard in their own defence. He flatly refused to obey the king's order. The king, urged on by his Norman friends, determined to treat this conduct as rebellion. He summoned a meeting of the Witenagemot at Gloucester, and bade Godwin attend it. Godwin came indeed, but with Harold, Sweyn, and all his armed men at his back. As Leofric and Siward had called out their Mercian and Northumbrian forces on the king's side, it looked as if civil war would break out.

It is, however, the distinguishing mark between this time and the Wars of the Roses, that whereas in the later period any excuse will do for war, in the earlier men again and again advance to the very verge of it, but shrink from taking the fatal step over the verge. The Witan was adjourned to London. Godwin came there protesting his innocence; day by day his followers melted away, "and ever the more the longer he staid". At length Godwin saw that the game was up. He and his sons all fled from the country. They were outlawed; their earldoms taken and given to their enemies.

Flight of  
Godwin,  
1051.

This of itself was enough to make the year 1051 of no pleasant memory, for the fall of Godwin meant the triumph of the Norman party. But another event, more ominous still, was to mark it. This was the visit to England of Duke William of Normandy.

It will be more convenient to make a fuller acquaintance with

Duke William later, at a time when England was to know him only too well as William the Conqueror. But there is scarcely any doubt on the object of the visit. It was no accident that he came at a time when Edward the Confessor's Norman friends were supreme. The king had no son, and there was no obvious heir. The duke came to spy out the land; and we are told that Edward made him some sort of promise that he should succeed to the throne. Of course Edward had no right to do this. The crown of England was his, but it was not his to give. None the less William had got what he wanted; when the time came he would be able to call himself rightful heir to the throne. He had, it must be remembered, some sort of family claim, for he and Edward the Confessor were cousins.

William of  
Normandy  
visits  
England,  
1051.

The time, however, was not yet; Godwin had been driven out, but his power was not broken. In 1052 his sons, Harold and Leofwine, landed in the west, where he soon joined them. Again one part of England was arrayed in arms against the other, and once again there was no fighting to speak of. Men "were loath to fight against their own kin"; it was a pity "that Englishmen should destroy one another to make room for foreigners". So, we are told, Edward pardoned Godwin and his sons, and received them back again. Edward was too weak to do anything else. Godwin's forces were stronger than his; the people vowed that "they would live or die with Godwin". If we look for a reason for this sudden devotion to the man from whose side they had melted like snow the year before, it may well be found in William of Normandy's visit and Edward the Confessor's promise. If news of that had leaked out, the people of England were wise in supporting Godwin; perhaps Robert of Jumièges, who had arranged the promise, was wise too. Under usual circumstances an Archbishop of Canterbury would be safe from violence whatever he had done, but it seems that Robert had done something that made him nervous, archbishop though he was, for he fled to the Continent, and two Norman bishops fled with him.

Revival of  
Godwin's  
power.

Close on Godwin's restoration came his death. Unfortunately Harold was no better able than his father to resist grasping at

land and power for the family. By doing so, he made enemies who were sure to do him an ill turn when the chance came. Thus, when Siward of Northumbria died, Harold secured the earldom for his brother Tostig, although Siward left a son. Further, he did his best to get hold of the earldom of Mercia, thereby incurring the enmity of Elfgar and his sons, Edwin and Morcar.<sup>1</sup> Probably in doing so Harold was himself aiming at the throne, yet he was digging the ground from beneath his own feet; his chance of resisting the Normans lay in having England united in his defence; and when the time came it was precisely these three—Tostig, Edwin, and Morcar—who failed him. For the time, however, Harold's prospects were bright. But two misfortunes, towards the end of the reign, weakened him. The first was a stroke of pure ill-luck. A boat in which he was sailing was driven by the weather to the shores of Ponthieu. This was indeed a windfall for the Duke of Normandy. Following the usual uncourteous habit of the time, Harold was made prisoner, and William would not let him go till he had sworn to recognize his claim to the throne. It seems that William saw plain enough who was likely to be his most dangerous rival. The second trouble came from the Northumbrian earldom. There was no prosperity in that ill-gotten gain. The Northumbrians had rebelled against Tostig and driven him out. Harold tried vainly to patch up the quarrel, but was obliged in the end to allow them to have as earl Morcar, son of Elfgar. This boded ill. Morcar was no lover of the house of Godwin; and Tostig went off to the Continent vowing vengeance on the brother who had, as he thought, basely deserted him.

When Edward the Confessor died, on January 5, 1066, and the Witan chose Harold to succeed him, it was clear that the new king would have need of all his valour and wisdom to keep

<sup>1</sup>The shifts among the earldoms are very confusing. Harold succeeded to his father's earldoms in Wessex; by doing so he left East Anglia vacant, and it was given to Elfgar, son of Leofric, Earl of Mercia. When Leofric died, Elfgar got Mercia, but could not retain East Anglia, which was shared between Harold's younger brothers, Leofwine and Gyrth. After that came the struggle in which Harold got Elfgar outlawed and seized Mercia. Elfgar recovered it, and it eventually passed to his son Edwin. The main point to remember is that until Tostig was cast out by Northumbria, Godwin's sons ruled practically all England, except Mercia. (See table, p. 48.)



his throne secure. Edwin and Morcar were jealous of him, since he was not of royal blood<sup>1</sup>; Tostig was beseeching king after king on the Continent for help against his brother; and, most dangerous of all, William of Normandy was gathering a host to assert his claim to the kingdom.

William had already given proof that he was not the man to put his hand to the plough and turn back. Born in 1027, he had succeeded as a boy of seven to what seemed an inheritance of woe. As was always the case under the feudal system, a minority meant a time of wild disorder. Four of the young duke's guardians were assassinated, one after the other. In the midst of battle and murder William formed that strong, relentless character which marked him. In 1047 the whole of the western part of his duchy revolted, but William, with the aid of the King of France, overthrew the rebels at Val-ès-dunes. Step by step his power went forward; he married Matilda, daughter of the Count of Flanders, and so gained a useful ally; he humbled his fiercest rival, Geoffrey of Anjou, and wrested Maine from him; he even beat the armies of his feudal superior, the King of France, and forced him to sue for peace. Harold had to deal with a ruler who, though in name a vassal, was more powerful than his master.

In making ready for his invasion, William left nothing to chance. Not only did he gather his own barons, but he invited help from other parts. The Counts of Brittany and Boulogne joined him, and warriors came from Aquitaine, Anjou, Flanders, and even distant Naples and Sicily. The prospect was attractive. Men were ready for an adventure under the banner of a renowned leader, all the more since they were likely to win lands or plunder by doing so. While this great force of the most warlike fighters in Europe was trooping in, William busied himself in the spring and summer of 1066 in building a fleet. In order to justify his invasion he put forward a solemn claim to the throne, reciting the promises of Edward and Harold, and even persuaded the Pope

Harold becomes king, 1066.

Career of William of Normandy.

Preparations for invasion, 1066.

<sup>1</sup> He was Edward the Confessor's brother-in-law; he was also distantly connected (through his mother) with the Danish line of kings.

to give his benediction to the enterprise. He had thus enlisted all sorts of forces on his side—love of adventure, the authority of law, greed of gain, and the blessings of the Church.

While knights were assembling and ships were building in Normandy, Harold had called out his army to guard the southern shore. Months passed, and the invaders did not come. The Saxon ships that had guarded the Channel were laid up. The old weakness of the fyrd showed itself once more. Men grew tired of waiting, and were beginning to disperse, when the storm burst where it was least expected. Tostig, aided by the King of Norway, landed in Yorkshire, and scattered the army with which Edwin and Morcar sought to resist him. Dangerous as it was to leave the south, Harold had to hurry north. His bodyguard, the housecarles, went with him, and men of the fyrd joined him on the march. He met the invaders at Stamford Bridge, on the Derwent, and overthrew them. Tostig and the Norwegian king were both slain. The vast army, which had come in three hundred ships, was so shattered that twenty-four were enough to carry it away.

Invasion  
of Tostig  
and Harold  
Hardrada.

Battle of  
Stamford  
Bridge.

It was a great victory, but it was Harold's last. The wind, which so often in later years was England's best ally,<sup>1</sup> on this occasion turned traitor. Blowing from the north, it had brought Tostig with it. While Harold was encountering him, it veered to the south and wafted Duke William over to Pevensey. "Had I been there," cried Harold, "they had never made good their landing." He hurried his army southward. In nine days they had travelled the 200 miles northward: they fought Stamford Bridge on September 25, started southwards again on October 2, were marching out of London by the 11th, and in two days more had covered nearly another 60 miles to the south. This headlong speed left the northern levies under Edwin and Morcar far behind; but the earls were not, it would seem, doing all they could have done to support Harold.

It might have been better strategy to wait near London for reinforcements, and compel the enemy to advance and give battle far from his base; but Harold could not look on calmly while the

<sup>1</sup> "Afflavit Deus. 1588."

Normans laid the countryside waste; besides, the reinforcements might join the foe, and not him. He marched south to fight it out once and for all.

The battle that was to decide England's fate was fought on October 14, 1066. Harold drew up his men on a hill eight miles north of Hastings: through his position ran the road to London; his rear was covered by the woods in which his men, if beaten, might gather again. His soldiers fought on foot; the house-carles in the centre were armed mostly with two-handed axes or long swords; but on the wings he had some hastily raised levies, some armed with clubs, some with spears, some with scythes.

William, well pleased that his fortnight's ravaging of the country had drawn his enemy southward, and saved him from the difficulties of an advance northwards through the Weald, moved his men forward to the attack. As they topped the rise of one hill they came in sight of the Saxons drawn up on an opposite slope at Senlac. The Norman strength lay chiefly in the mail-clad cavalry, a force then and for long after held to be superior to any infantry. But the Duke did not rely on his cavalry alone. He had with him a large body of infantry and a number of archers. His men advanced to the attack across the valley in three lines: the archers in front, the infantry behind them, and the horsemen in the rear. The battle began with a volley of arrows, which Harold's men answered with spears, javelins, throwing axes and other missiles. This proved too hot for the archers, and William pushed his infantry up to the attack. These reached the firm line of Saxon shields, but could not break it. The real weight of William's forces was then flung into the battle. Up the slope, already dotted with corpses, rode the horsemen: with a tremendous crash they came on, some of them, like Taillefer, penetrating the line, and only being struck down inside it. Still the Saxons held firm, and plied their axes vigorously till even the horsemen recoiled, the Breton knights, who formed the left wing, retreating in great confusion. A portion of the shire levies thought the battle was won, and ran down the hill to pursue the foe. But their rash courage proved their ruin. William turned on them with his unbroken centre and destroyed them. They were, how-



ever, but a small part of the Saxon force. The rest were still strong and undaunted in their position.

Indeed, so far William had made but little real progress. His attacks on the main Saxon position had been beaten off. He had only won a small success over an ill-disciplined portion of the enemy. Yet this small success proved the key to victory.

A second charge and a prolonged and furious hand-to-hand struggle had cost both sides dear, but the shields still remained steady round the English standards of the Dragon and the Fighting Man. Morning had worn to afternoon when William bethought him of a stratagem. He ordered a feigned retreat. The Normans fell back in seeming rout. Again the Saxon levies of the fyrd repeated their mistake. This time a huge mass of them poured from their position, and were again trampled and cut down in the open. All that remained to Harold was his guard, the trustworthy body of house-carles in the centre.

The last stage in the battle was to overcome this stubborn body. They were subjected to the fiercest trial which soldiers can have to undergo: in turn plied with arrow fire to which they could make no reply (since Harold had no bowmen left, and his house-carles had used up their missile weapons), and then charged by the horse.<sup>1</sup> "In the English ranks," says William of Poitiers, "the only movement was the dropping of the dead; the living stood motionless." How fiercely they fought is shown by the fact that Duke William had three horses killed under him. But at last the end came. Harold was struck in the eye by one of the arrows fired in the air: the Norman knights burst into the line: the scanty remainder of the English army scattered into the forest in their rear.

Shakespeare has written:

"This England never did, nor never shall,  
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,  
But when it first did help to wound itself".

The period of English history which we have followed in this chapter gives a striking example of this. Twice in ninety years

<sup>1</sup> Compare June 18, 1815.

was England at a conqueror's feet. It was not for want of valour. None could be braver than Edmund Ironside or Harold. None could do more than give their lives for their country, and the English army at Hastings poured out its blood like water for its king. It was not the open enemy that was to be feared, but the familiar friend; not the Dane or Norman, but the recreant Englishman. The falseness of Ethelred, the treachery of Edric, the selfish greed of the house of Godwin, the rebellion of Tostig, the half-heartedness of Edwin and Morcar—these were the true causes of the Saxon downfall.

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## VIII. England under Foreign Kings

### The Normans, 1066–1154

It is a common observation that our early history divides by reigns much more easily than our later history. The reason, too, is as plain as the fact. It is not because the character of each monarch differed more widely in early days than in later ones, but because there was a wider field for difference in character to show itself. When the king had himself a large share in government, it made much difference to the kingdom whether he was strong or feeble, honest or untrustworthy, ambitious or lazy. So long as the ministers he chose merely did his will, then all in the end turned on his character. Government of this kind is called *personal* Government. But now another body has grown up which has taken from the king many of his powers and duties. Consequently the character of Parliament, and of the ministers who carry out the will of Parliament, has become more important than the character of the king. Hence in later days we draw our divisions rather by ministries than by reigns; this is the era of *representative* Government.

It would then be quite a reasonable method to divide the period from the Norman Conquest to the accession of Henry II merely by reigns, for the characters of the kings are themselves

diverse enough to give a distinct stamp to each. But we must not only observe differences, we must seek for likenesses also; and such a search does not go far before it shows that all four reigns have a peculiarity common to them all, and yet possessed by no reign which follows. Each of the four kings has the character of a *foreigner* ruling by right of conquest over a conquered people. The kings were Norman, and the people Saxon; Saxon subjects held down by Norman conquerors. It is true that Saxon revolts were not quite so common as might be expected, but the Saxons learnt that to rebel was to invite the chastisement of scorpions in place of the chastisement of whips. Their position was hopeless. In addition, they speedily found that, hard master as the king was, the Norman baron was worse, and so they supported the Crown against the "petty tyrant". Yet it was a sullen support, given from self-interest, with no motive of loyalty or affection about it. Kings and barons alike were hateful to them as foreigners: they submitted to the rule of a foreign king as being better than that of foreign barons. But their real desire was to be rid of them all.

England under foreign kings.

Supported by English through fear of the barons.

By the time Henry II's reign is reached this feeling of antagonism was dwindling. Henry II was no longer regarded as a foreign king; the division between conquerors and conquered was growing less sharp; even the barons were taking a more national character. We shall have to dwell more upon this in the next period; for the present it is enough to draw a mental line of division between Stephen and Henry II. On one side of it are Norman kings, on the other English kings.

Remembering, then, that we have to deal with kings who were foreigners, we must see—

1. What the Norman Conquest meant for England, and how William I established and kept up his power; how also his sons continued his policy; and—

2. What happened when the king, instead of being strong like William I and Rufus and Henry I, was a weak man.

In tracing these events we shall see the Feudal System at its best, and also at its worst.



## The Conquest and the Feudal System,

1066-1135

## William I; William II; Henry I

The victory of Hastings laid the south and east of England at William's feet, but it did not touch the north and west. English disunion and submission. win and Morcar's forces were still dangerous. William's conduct, indeed, shows that he did not expect the country of Alfred and Edmund Ironside to submit after one defeat only. But the English were still quarrelling among themselves; so, though the Witan chose Edgar Atheling, the grandson of Edmund Ironside, to succeed Harold as king, yet in a short time they found it hopeless to resist further. William, indeed, was anxious for them to submit of their own free will. He had moved cautiously towards London, and had burned Southwark; but then, instead of besieging London, he had crossed the Thames and moved his army to Berkhamstead. Thither an embassy, with the Atheling himself at the head of it, came to William and offered him the crown. Thus he was able to say that he ruled not as conqueror, but as the lawful king of England elected by the Witan. Canute, and even Alfred, his two greatest predecessors, had owed their crown to the same title.

Being able to say he was lawful king was a great advantage, but William was still in an extremely difficult position. He had two things to do: the first, to subdue the English thoroughly; the second, to keep his own Norman followers contented and obedient, to reward them, and yet not make them so strong that they could revolt against him. He had, in fact, to keep himself master of both Normans and English alike.

His first stroke was to declare that all those who had fought against him at Hastings were rebels, fighting against their lawful king, and that their estates were forfeited to him. Thus he became master of almost all the land in the south of England. It was not long before he got hold of the rest. In 1067, when the Conqueror had gone

William's  
difficulties.

Forfeiture of  
estates to the  
king.

back to the Continent, leaving his brother, Odo of Bayeux, as Justiciar, to rule the country, rebellions burst out everywhere. In the south-west, in Mercia, in Northumbria, there were English risings. Luckily for William there was no union among the English rebels. Each district took as its leader a descendant of its own earl; each fought for itself and each was consequently crushed by itself. William returned, subdued the west, took Exeter, harried Gloucester and Worcester, and drove the English leaders to take refuge in Ireland and Wales. In the north he had sterner work to do. The rebels were headed by Waltheof, Earl of Huntingdon, and helped by the King of Scotland, who had married Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling. A force of Danes under King Sweyn, who had hopes of recovering Canute's kingdom for himself, also took the field with them. At first they were successful. Durham and York fell into their hands. But the allies soon began to quarrel, and William, marching north, found them an easy prey. The Danes drew off in their ships, plundering Peterborough on their way, thereby making themselves as odious to the English as they had been in Ethelred's day. Waltheof was forced to submit; and to punish the rebels, and guard against another rising, William harried the whole of the Vale of York. From the Humber to the Tees everything that could be burnt was burnt. The people were slain, driven out or left to die of starvation. Nearly twenty years after, the *Domesday Survey* echoes the same story of one estate after another—"Waste".

English  
risings,  
1067.

Waltheof,  
1067.

Harrying of  
the North.

This harrying of the north showed that William would not endure rebellion tamely. He still had work to do, however. Amid the eastern fens, in the Isle of Ely, surrounded by marshes, Hereward, "the Last of the English", still resisted. He had come there from Peterborough, when the Danes left, and he was joined by the last of William's enemies, among them Morcar and the Bishop of Durham. For a year he held out. The monks of Ely are said to have betrayed the way into his camp, but when Morcar and his friends surrendered, Hereward with a few followers fought his way out and escaped. Morcar and the rest were treated as rebels. The King

Hereward,  
1070-2.

of Scotland, too, was forced to yield and to acknowledge William as his lord, just as his ancestors had acknowledged Edward the Elder and Canute.

These useless risings completed the work that Hastings had begun. They riveted the chain of William's power round England's neck. Each rebellion was followed by fresh confiscations of land, and the land was used to reward Norman followers. Even in the cases where an Englishman was not turned out from his estates, he was obliged to pay a fine and to admit that the land was really the king's and not his own; that he was the king's tenant and vassal and therefore bound to serve him.

This made more definite what is called the Feudal System. It is not true to say that this was altogether introduced by the Norman kings, for the essence of the feudal system, the idea that because a man had land, therefore he had certain rights and owed certain duties, had existed in Saxon times. In Edgar's day it had been ordained that every "landless man should have a lord", and "commendation", that is to say, the practice of a man's placing himself under the protection of a more powerful neighbour, was also common enough in Saxon England. But the Normans drew closer the tie between the man and his land. The holding of land became the basis of everything. The king at the head was the owner of all the land. He granted large estates to his nobles and barons, who were called *tenants-in-chief*, and who were bound by these grants of land to fight for the king if he called on them to do so. The tenants-in-chief in their turn granted parts of their estates to their followers, who were then called *mesne-tenants*<sup>1</sup> and were bound in their turn to obey the tenants-in-chief as superiors. Mesne-tenants might, if they pleased, regrant parts of their estates. And below all these classes of *free* tenants were vast numbers of *serfs*, called by various names of villeins, boors (*bordarii*), cottars, who had very small holdings of land, some with thirty acres and others with lesser holdings, and who had in return for this to work upon the lord's land and gather his crops for him. They were practically his property—part of his estate.

The Feudal  
System: Land  
Tenure the  
Basis.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. intermediate tenants.



We may think of it as a sort of pyramid:<sup>1</sup> serfs at the bottom; above them free tenants; minor tenants owing obedience to other greater men; at the top the tenants-in-chief holding direct from the king; the king as the apex; land, the bond which unites them and in the main settles their rights and duties. But we must not picture it as more orderly than it was. In simplest idea it was regular; in practice and working it was intolerably confused and disorderly. There were many forms of tenancy, and men owed all sorts of duties to many different persons: for example, the same man might hold some land from the king, some from the church, and some from a baron.

It is easy to see that the English came off badly in this arrangement. As the Norman friends of the king were put at the top, the English naturally sank to the bottom. Many English become serfs. Those who, in days before the Conquest, had been free, though they were owners of very small estates, now often found themselves reduced to being serfs, or, as they were sometimes called, villeins.

We must see what this meant for them. In the first place, they were no longer free. They were bound to the land and could not leave it. They were forced to work two or Serfs. three days in each week on their lord's estate, without being paid for doing so. They could not give their daughters in marriage without their lord's leave. And, beyond all this, they were in his power. He could punish them almost as he chose by fining them, or causing them to be flogged, and they could not get any redress. This was bad enough, but it was made worse by the fact that their lords were almost always foreigners. The Normans despised the English. They called them "dogs of Saxons", and treated them worse than dogs. They did not understand the English tongue, and paid no attention to what the English said or felt. William might pretend that he had, after all, only taken the place of Harold on the English throne, but to the English he was indeed a conqueror, and a very hard conqueror as well.

In this way the Feudal System, as established by King

<sup>1</sup> See diagram, p. 64. But this only gives the simple outline of what was really far more complicated.

William, bore hard on the English. We shall see that they became worse off when for a strong king was substituted a weak one. William might rule sternly, but he ruled all alike. By his gifts of land he had bound to him a body of armed followers who could defend him against any attempts of the English to drive him out. Yet he did not mean to let this armed force be used against him. He himself had been a feudal vassal before he became a feudal king. As Duke of Normandy he had been so strong in his own dominions that he could disregard his superior, the King of France, as he liked. He had even met him in battle, and had overthrown him. He had no mind to let his barons be as troublesome to him as he had been to the King of France. So he did three wise things, and, by doing so, set up a different kind of Feudalism from that which later proved such a curse to both France and Germany.

First, he gave his barons much land, but he gave it them in scattered estates, not all together. There were indeed three

**Barons' estates scattered.** exceptions: he made great earldoms in Durham, Kent, and Chester. But the earldom of Durham was given to the Bishop of Durham, who, being a Churchman, could

leave no heir to inherit it; and the earldom of Kent he placed in the hands of his half-brother, Odo of Bayeux, who was also a Churchman. The earldom of Chester alone went to a layman, but no doubt William expected that his hands would be kept full enough by the need of guarding the border against the Welsh. These "palatine" earldoms were, however, the exception. The usual rule was to divide the estates widely. For example, Robert of Mortain, one of the greatest of the barons, held seven hundred and ninety-three manors, but they were in twenty different counties. Wherever we find a man with vast estates, we find they are much scattered. Thus, if a baron intended to rebel against the king, he could not collect his forces in one place; and he had always jealous neighbours round him who kept a watch on what he did. This precaution, wise in

**Revolt of the earls, 1074.** itself, did not, however, save William from rebellions among his barons. In 1074 Ralf, Earl of Norfolk, and Roger, Earl of Hereford, plotted a rising while the king was away in Normandy, and invited Waltheof, Earl of Hunt-

ingdon, the only one of the old English nobles who had retained any great amount of power, to join them. Waltheof hesitated; at first he agreed, then he drew back, and let Archbishop Lanfranc know what was going on. William was too strong and too quick for the rebels. Ralf was driven oversea, and Roger imprisoned for life, but the harshest measure fell on the unlucky Waltheof, who was beheaded. His earldom passed, with the hand of his daughter, to David, King of Scotland, and became the source of much dispute in after-days. In 1079 William had again to struggle with a rebellious feudal lord; this time his own son, Robert. The two met in battle at Gerberoi, not recognizing each other, and Robert's lance bore his father from his horse and wounded him. Shocked at his narrow escape from the crime of killing his father, Robert sought and received pardon, but William never trusted him again. Three years later Odo of Bayeux angered William by raising a private army to make war in Italy on his own account, and, though Odo was his half-brother and a bishop, William shut him in prison for the rest of his life.

Robert's  
rebellion,  
1079.

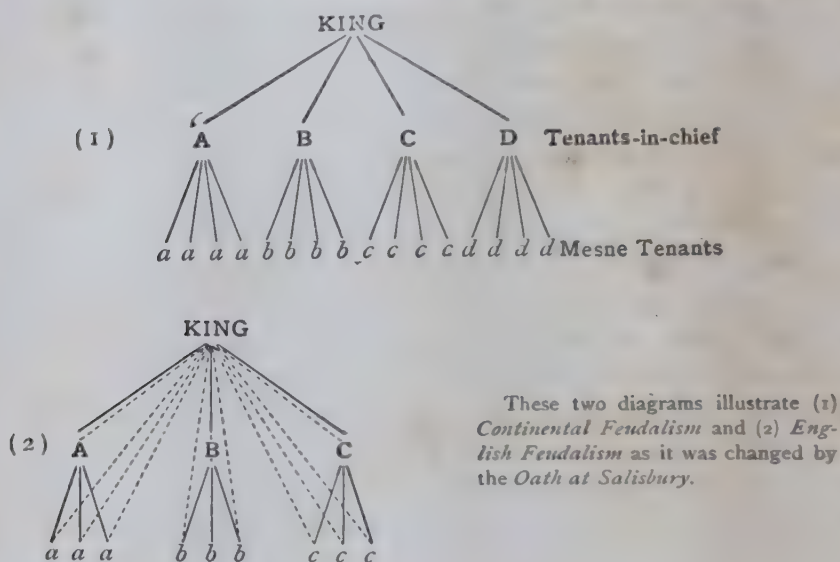
These troubles made William see that if he was to keep his barons in order he had need to do more than merely sever their estates. Accordingly, in 1085, after "very deep speech with his Witan", he took his second great step to make his power secure; he caused to be made a great Survey in which was set down all the land of England, who held it, what it was worth in money dues, so that he might know exactly what was due to him, and so that no one might dispute over it. The results of this survey were set down in the *Domesday Book*. Two things are especially remarkable in it. It is extraordinarily thorough and minute. It tells not only the name of the holder, and from whom it was held; not only the number of villeins and servile tenants on each estate, but it even records the ploughs, oxen, horses, sheep, pigs, mills, and fishponds. One English writer thought it unworthy of a king to enquire into things like these. He says "it is shame to be telling of, but he did not think it shame to be doing it". William, however, did not feel any shame in finding out all about his kingdom, especially in order to secure for himself a steady supply of money. And, secondly,

Domesday  
survey.



though *Domesday* is more than eight hundred years old, it illustrates the amazing permanence and continuity of our rural history. Almost every obscure hamlet of to-day has its name set down in *Domesday*. The names are often somewhat changed, but that is all. The divisions of the countryside stand now as they stood in the Conqueror's reign.

William followed up the survey by his third great measure.



He assembled every free tenant of land to a great "gemot" or meeting at Salisbury, and made them all swear allegiance to him direct. This "oath at Salisbury" made it the duty of every mesne-tenant to obey the king first and his feudal superior after. If his feudal superior called on him to come out and fight against the king, his answer would be that his first duty was: Obey the king. This clipped the wings of the great feudal nobles. On the Continent they could defy the crown by bringing their vassals into the field. The king had no hold over the vassals, save through the feudal lord. If the feudal lord were a rebel, he had no hold at all. But in England after the oath at Salisbury the nobles were no longer so dangerous; they could not make sure of their vassals' support. Here is the real difference between English and Continental

The oath at Salisbury, 1086.

feudalism; this is why Edward I and Edward III and Henry V were strong kings, ruling a united realm, while in France Philip IV, Charles V, and Louis XI were hampered and thwarted by half-independent feudal princes.

William did not live to reap the full benefit of these measures. In 1087 he went to war with the King of France. While his men were sacking and burning the town of Mantes, his horse, struck by a falling beam, reared and threw the king hard against the pommel of his saddle. From this hurt he never recovered, dying a few weeks after at Rouen.

Death of  
William,  
1087.

William was a hard man, who was never held back by any ideas of mercy when he thought it needful to be stern. The harrying of Yorkshire, the laying waste of the New Forest to make himself a hunting park, the imprisonment of Odo, the execution of Waltheof, all show him ruthless, at times even cruel. Yet his strong government, rule of a foreign conqueror though it was, had one great merit that counterbalances all his harshness. He united the kingdom under his own firm sway. Under Edward the Confessor and Harold the power of the Crown had dwindled, while that of the great earls had grown. We have noticed already that Godwin and Leofric and Siward are not unlike the turbulent barons whose quarrels brought about the Wars of the Roses. This tendency to disunion and lawlessness William crushed.

And there is another side to the Norman Conquest which must not be omitted. Had the Saxons been strong and vigorous and united, they would probably have flung off the Normans. Their failure goes to show that the Saxon character had declined, or at any rate was lacking in some of the great qualities that make a nation. The invasion of the Normans, the rule of a conquering race, and the eventual fusion of Norman and Saxon blood made, out of much adversity, the "Englishman" who proved himself stiffer material than his Saxon forefathers, and possessed the enterprise and vigour which they seem to have lacked or lost.

We may pass over the reigns of William Rufus and Henry I somewhat briefly. One important class of events which we have neglected in William I's reign we will continue to set on one side;

that is, the dealings of these kings with the Church. Church affairs are best treated as a whole, leading up to the great quarrel between Henry II and Becket. Apart from these, neither William II nor Henry I calls up anything very striking. Both kings continued the policy of their father. Both had troubles with rebellious barons, and succeeded in overcoming them; both were at least as much interested in affairs in Normandy as in England.

The Conqueror had left the duchy of Normandy to his eldest son, Robert, and gave England to his second son, William. Here William Rufus, 1087-1100. was a ready ground for quarrel, since Robert had looked to succeeding his father in both countries.

As many of the barons held lands both in Normandy and England, they owed allegiance to both William and Robert; when war broke out they would have to make a choice which they would obey; and as Robert was easy-going and good-natured, while William soon showed himself to be as stern as his father, and was especially vigorous in exacting money in every way he could, a large number of barons took Robert's side. They were especially angered by what they regarded as the exactions of

**Ranulf** Ranulf Flambard, the king's Justiciar, that is to say, **Flambard.** the officer who represented the king when he was absent from the kingdom. Ranulf, who was also Bishop of Durham, was careful to enforce the full payment of all the dues which belonged to the king under the feudal system; and the most profitable of these dues came when an estate passed to a minor or an heiress. Flambard used to seize for the king all the profits of the estate till the minor came of age or the heiress married; he scrupulously collected the fines or payments due on coming into an estate. These exactions were legal enough,<sup>1</sup> but Flambard's activity made them very burdensome. He made the king, it was said, "every man's heir". Thus, to guard against his discontented barons, and to help him against his brother, William was forced to make friends with his English subjects. Foreigner and Norman though he was, he had to rely on what he called his "brave and honourable English".

With their help he triumphed over his enemies. Odo of

<sup>1</sup> Save in the case of the Church (see p. 83).



Bayeux, Roger Montgomery, Robert of Bellême his son, Roger Mowbray, all rose against him, stirred up by the Duke of Normandy. William defeated them all. He beat back a Welsh invasion, and by promising to his barons any land they might conquer from the Welsh, he encouraged a set of warlike adventurers who would keep his frontier safe in order to secure their own lands. He captured Cumberland from the Scots and built Carlisle Castle to overawe the country; the King of Scots, invading Northumberland out of revenge, was surprised and slain at Alnwick. William even turned the tables on his brother Robert, by leading an army in Normandy. The quarrel between the brothers was patched for the time. Duke Robert soon after fell in with the fashion of his time and made up his mind to join the Crusades. To find money to equip himself and his followers, he pledged his duchy to William for 10,000 merks, without reflecting that he was not at all likely to be either able to repay the money, or eject his brother from the duchy when once he had got a hold on it.

Rebellion, 1088.

Pledging of Normandy.

While Robert was in Palestine, William Rufus died, killed by an accident, or, as some said, murdered, while hunting in the New Forest. His death gave to Henry, the youngest and most capable of the Conqueror's sons, the unexpected chance of making himself both King of England and Duke of Normandy. England fell into his hands without much difficulty; but it was certain that when Robert came back he would have to fight hard at any rate in Normandy, and probably in England also. Thus he, too, like Rufus, was led to trust much to his English subjects, and he did his best to win their support by marrying Matilda, daughter of the King of Scots, who was heiress of the old line of Alfred.<sup>1</sup> He also imprisoned Rufus's Justiciar, Ranulf Flambard, recalled Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, from the exile into which Rufus had driven him, and issued a Charter of Liberties, in which he promised that the "aids" taken

Henry I,  
1100-1135.

Marriage with  
Matilda.

<sup>1</sup> Thus from Egbert to George V there is only a very brief gap in the blood line. The kings who do not come in are Canute, Hardicanute, Harold, William I, William II, Henry I (save by marriage), and Stephen.

from his feudal tenants should be strictly according to right, and further, that he would keep all the laws of Edward the Confessor's day.

These preparations for the storm were hardly made when the storm burst. Robert returned, and, at the invitation of some of Henry's barons, landed with an army in England. **Robert's invasion.** Henry had to buy him off by a promise of a pension, and the surrender of Normandy. This peace, however, turned out shortlived. Robert of Bellême rebelled against Henry, and managed to get Robert of Normandy to take up his side. Henceforth, from 1104 onwards, there was no peace between the brothers. In 1106 Henry defeated Robert at Tenchebrai, and took him prisoner. Robert never saw liberty again. Till his death he was held captive at Cardiff. Normandy passed into Henry's hands. Robert had left a son, William Clito, who remained to trouble Henry's peace till 1128, when he died of a wound.

Disturbed as Normandy was, England enjoyed under Henry I a rest from insurrection and war for more than thirty years. Henry used this time to strengthen the royal power against the barons.

**Royal justice.** He revived the old Shire and Hundred Courts; and not only did this make it easy for each man to get justice at home, but it also diminished the power of the feudal lords; for it curtailed the "manorial" courts where the lord, or the lord's steward, presided, whereas, in the Shire and Hundred Courts, justice was administered not by one man but by a body of free-tenants; and over the Shire Court presided the Sheriff, who was a royal officer of very wide power. Thus instead of a multitude of feudal jurisdictions, often very diverse and uncertain, and always oppressive, Henry began to substitute royal justice, which would be the same for all, in every place.

Further, since most offences were punishable by fines, justice and revenue were closely connected, and Henry I, though less oppressive in his taxation than Rufus, was quite as much alive to the advantage of a plentiful supply of money. He began his reign with the thoroughly practical step of seizing the Treasury at Winchester, and, from that time onward, never loosed his hold

over it. He found in Bishop Roger of Salisbury, an official who organized his exchequer thoroughly, and he made its power felt by sending "barons of the exchequer" on circuit through the country, thus bringing out-of-the-way districts into connection with royal taxation, just as the Sheriffs made them familiar with royal justice.

The exchequer.

How closely justice and revenue were connected with each other, and also with policy, is brought home to us by the King's Council. In its widest sense (the *Magnum Concilium*) this included much the same persons as the old Saxon Witan, though with a different qualification. The Witan had been the assembly of the "Wise", and included church dignitaries, officials, and chief landholders. So did the king's "Great" Council, but for another reason. To it came all the king's tenants-in-chief; and since archbishops, bishops, abbots, officials of the court, and barons were of course tenants-in-chief, we find them all in the Great Council just as they met in the Witan. But the qualification was no longer "wisdom", but the holding of land direct from the king.

The King's Council.

A body so cumbrous as this *Magnum Concilium* would obviously be rarely summoned. As a rule business fell into the hands of the "ordinary" Council—the *Curia Regis*. At the head of it was the king, and in it sat the great officials, the Justiciar, who acted as regent in the king's absence, the Chancellor, who was his secretary, the Chamberlain at the head of his household, the Marshal and the Constable, who looked after his soldiers. Yet it is a peculiarly confusing body, for it engages in so many duties under so many names. It was a council of state; it was a law court;<sup>1</sup> it collected and accounted for the revenue.<sup>2</sup> It has been aptly called a royal "court-of-all-work".

The "ordinary" Council.

The explanation of this many-sidedness is found by looking at the office of king. In the earliest form the king was head of his tribe in everything. He ruled his people, and led them in war; he was their judge and lawgiver. David, and the kings

<sup>1</sup> From this side of its activity has descended our Court of King's Bench and the term King's Counsel (K.C.).

<sup>2</sup> And was then called the Court of Exchequer. The term "Court" shows how finance and justice were entangled.



of the Iliad, are of this type. As the tribe grew by degrees into the nation, the king called in a council to help him, and this council naturally came to wield most of the powers that were the king's. Again, in course of time the work which proved too much for one man proved too much for one Council, and we get a multitude of councils and officials, each restricted to one branch; one manages justice, another revenue; a third makes laws; others attend to the army and to the navy. All are really subdivisions of the old royal authority. The king remains as the nominal head: his powers have been split up. We see this process at work in Henry I's reign, but not in it alone. It pervades English history; it is indeed a branch of history by itself: it is *constitutional* history.

Henry had shut his brother in prison and had seen his nephew slain; he had tamed his Norman barons; he had made friends with the English; his name was feared over the length and breadth of the land; he had punished ill-doers with such sternness, that he had gained the nickname of the "Lion of Justice"; yet with all this, his last days were filled with anxiety. His son had perished in a shipwreck off the Channel Islands. A daughter, Maud, was his only heir. Henry tried to secure her succession to the throne; he had made his barons swear fealty to her. But it needed little penetration to see that they would not be likely to keep their oaths, for the idea of a woman on the throne was then strange—nay almost absurd. And whether they rejected her or served her, it would be an ill day for England when the strong hand was removed and the barons were able each to do what was right in his own eyes.

Delegation  
of royal  
power.

Failure of  
Henry's work  
owing to lack  
of a son.

## IX. Feudalism at its Worst. The “Nineteen Long Winters”

Stephen, 1135-54

When Henry I died, his plans for his daughter came to nothing. Maud was neither popular nor wise. She had married a foreigner, Geoffrey of Anjou, who was hated by the barons. Besides, no one then dreamed that a woman could be fit to rule the country. Consequently the barons, assembled in Great Council, set on the throne Stephen, Count of Blois. Maud.

Stephen was the son of Adela, William I's daughter. As a grandson of the Conqueror, he had a sound enough title to the throne. He was also, the chronicler tells us, a “mild man and a good”, so there was hope that he would be a tolerable king. His share of goodness did not turn out to be very large, but his mildness, in other words his weakness, was undeniable. And the throne was at this time no place for a mild man; what was wanted was a strong man who could keep order. Stephen.

Consequently, Stephen's reign was purely disastrous. It was one long struggle for power. First, David of Scotland burst over the border, nominally as Maud's ally. He was defeated at the Battle of the Standard, in which the barons and yeomen of Yorkshire, standing fast round a chariot on which floated the banners of St. Peter of York, St. Wilfred of Ripon, and St. John of Beverley, beat off the Scottish charges. But while the Scots were routed in the north, Maud's half-brother, Robert of Gloucester, rebelled in the west, and Stephen had to buy off David by handing over to him Northumberland and Cumberland. David gave up Maud's cause and went home; the part he played was not a noble one, but he was neither better nor worse than the rest; he was only fighting for his own hand.

So far Stephen had the support of the Church, since his brother, Henry, was Bishop of Winchester and firm on his side.

Rebellion--Battle  
of the Standard.

He soon managed to lose this support. He demanded that the Bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln should hand over their castles to him. When they refused, he cast them into prison. This was certain to set the Church against him: but, more than that, it lost him the favour of the great officials; for this Bishop of Salisbury was that same Roger who had served Henry I so faithfully at the Exchequer, and the Bishop of Lincoln was his nephew. To quarrel with such men was sheer folly. Speedily Stephen's power slipped from him. He moved to capture the castle of Lincoln, which had been surprised by Ralf, Earl of Chester. Ralf, leaving his wife to defend the castle, gathered forces in his earldom, and, uniting with Robert of Gloucester, fell on Stephen's besieging army. A terrible conflict followed. Stephen showed that though he was a feeble king, he was a sturdy warrior. He met the Earl of Chester in fight, and, had his battle-axe not broken on the earl's helmet, might have overthrown him. As it was, his men gave way, and he was himself taken prisoner.

Maud thus became "Lady of England", but she soon proved equally unfit to rule. Haughty and wilful, without gratitude to those who had put her on the throne, she could not understand that the same people could put her off again. She, too, quarrelled with the churchmen. She was obliged to set Stephen at liberty in exchange for Robert of Gloucester, a prisoner in the hands of the other side. Soon she tasted the bitterness of defeat. She was besieged in Oxford, and only escaped by being let down at night from the walls by a rope, crossing the Thames on the ice, and fleeing across the snow. Then she gathered forces and fought again.

Yet battles and adventures, alliances and desertions, are but a part of our concern. History is sometimes written as if it were but the history of the mighty in the land; yet the case of the lowly no less deserves attention. Kings and nobles are under the fortunes of war; but the misfortunes of war lie heaviest upon the people. So it was in Stephen's reign. Rightly did the chronicler style it "the nineteen long winters". The fact was that the war went on because the barons did not wish to end it. Selfish, ambitious, merciless, unscrupulous, each baron



made himself strong in his castle, and hoped to add to his possessions by violence or treachery. There was not one who took an honest part. When they fought, it was not for their side, but for themselves. Geoffrey, Earl of Essex, and others like him took their titles from both parties and pillaged both. "All became forsworn and broke their allegiance." They did not want pitched battles, for if either Stephen or Maud became supreme, their day would be over. "Then arose the barons, or rather the betrayers of England, treating of concord, though they loved discord: but they would not join battle, for they desired not to exalt either of the two." Each in his petty realm reigned like a tyrant, striking his own coin, declaring his own justice, oppressing the wretched people by making them work at the castles with which they filled the land. They "put men in prison for their gold and silver. They hanged men up by the feet and smoked them with foul smoke. Some were hanged up by their thumbs, others by the head, and burning things were hung on to their feet. They put knotted strings about their heads and writhed them till they went into the brain. They put men into prisons where adders and snakes and toads were crawling, and so tormented them. Some they put into a chest, short and narrow and not deep, that had sharp stones within, and forced men therein so that they broke all their bones." When Stephen brought over foreigners from abroad to fight for him, these behaved even worse, sacking, burning, spoiling wherever they went. "Men said that Christ and his saints slept." The poor were reduced to misery; many of them whose huts had been burnt died of cold and hunger in the fields. This was what being left to the mercy of the barons meant. This was what the rule of a "mild man and a good" led to in the days of feudalism.

The rivalry between Stephen and Maud seemed likely to be continued between their children. Fortunately for England Stephen's son died, and Stephen had no longer an interest in going on with the struggle. Once more, as so often in this reign, we have an example of the power of the churchmen; Archbishop Theobald managed to bring the two sides to terms. It was agreed by the Treaty of Wallingford, in 1153, that

Stephen should be king for the rest of his life, but that Maud's son, Henry, should succeed him. Henry had not to wait long. In 1154 Stephen died.

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## X. Henry II and the Restoration of Order

Henry II had got the title of king. His life's work was spent in making that kingship a reality. He strove to make himself supreme in his kingdom, and what he did includes a great success and a great failure. Over the barons he triumphed; the Church, on the other hand, worsted him. We have to deal in succession with these two struggles, and we may leave a third aspect of his greatness, his position as a Continental ruler, to lead on to the exploits of his warrior son, Richard Cœur de Lion.

To understand the reasons of his strength, it is necessary to look for a moment beyond England. His father, Geoffrey of

Henry's possessions: England, Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and Aquitaine.

Anjou, was one of a family that, like the Norman dukes, had been fertile in strong men, men who had united warlike daring with the ruthlessness and unscrupulousness by which

a feudal vassal of the King of France could make himself as strong as his master.<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey had not been able to do very much in England, where even Maud's followers feared and disliked him. But he had reduced Normandy, and when he died, in 1151, he left Henry, then eighteen years of age, the ruler of Normandy, and Count of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine. The next year Henry married Eleanor, divorced wife of Louis VII, and thereby became Duke of Aquitaine, Count of Poitou, Toulouse, Saintonge, and Limousin, with a suzerainty over all the countries west of the Rhone. As he made good these

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. R. Green has pointed out how typical their castle at Anjou is of the family. The castle (what remains of it) is a huge, hideous, black pile which seems to scowl down at the town.

dominions against the King of France, he was, even before he became King of England, the mightiest uncrowned head in Europe. If we add that he was skilled in war, adroit in diplomacy, full of restless energy and fiery temper, never for a moment idle, knowing well how to use his own time and how to make others work for him, it is plain that the barons would

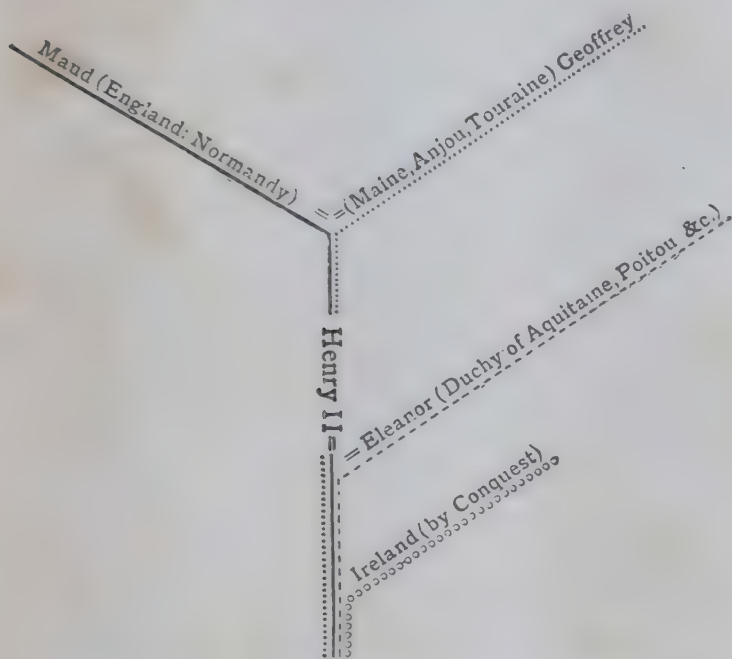


Diagram illustrating the aggregation of power in Henry II's hands.

find him widely different from the "mild and good" King Stephen.

Henry's general policy was to undo all that Stephen had done. The first thing was to restore the royal revenue. Stephen had allowed two-thirds of it to dwindle away by quarrelling with the bishops and so upsetting the management of the exchequer, and by granting crown lands to his friends; and the little that Stephen had not spent Maud had scattered. Henry took back the crown lands, and restored Nigel, Bishop of Ely (Roger of Salisbury's nephew), to his familiar place in the exchequer. He stopped

Restoration of  
revenue and de-  
struction of castles.



the practice of barons issuing their own coin, put out a good coinage of his own, and took stern measures with any who adulterated it. He pulled down many hundreds of those oppressive castles which the barons had built in defiance of law. He recovered the royal castles which were in baronial hands. Of the barons, Mortimer held out on the west border, Aumale in Scarborough, and Peverel in the Peak; but he marched against them with an army, and made them submit. The country was still full of the hateful mercenaries who had made it their business to plunder both sides. These were expelled from the realm. Henry also forced Malcolm, King of Scots, to yield the northern counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Northumberland, which David had seized; and Malcolm even renewed the old homage, declaring himself to be Henry's "man".

The ease with which his restoration of order was carried out makes it clear that Henry had on his side the mass of the people of England. They had suffered under Stephen's folly and the barons' cruelty long enough to know that the best thing for all was a strong king. If only Henry were "strong and of a good courage" the land would have rest. And rest was what the land needed.

Henry was, however, far more than a domineering king, bent on having his own way. He was a statesman. He set himself not only to check misdeeds, but to prevent future misdoing. He sought precautions as well as remedies. His authority might be recovered by force, but it must be maintained by law. Thus, while he strengthened his army, he also took pains to strengthen his law courts.

Hitherto the weakness of the feudal army had been twofold. First, there was the danger of mutiny or neglect. If the king was weak, the baron would not come: or perhaps he came with only a part of his proper followers. But even when the king was, like Henry, strong enough to compel attendance, there was another fatal defect: the tenant was only bound to serve for forty days in the year. It was impossible to carry on a campaign, especially when sieges were long and tiresome, with soldiers who went home again after a little more than a month in the field. So Henry relied more on soldiers whom he

**Feudal army.**

paid to fight for him. He used a plan, begun in his grandfather's time, of taking a tax called "scutage",<sup>1</sup> which was a payment imposed on each "knight's fee"—that is to say, the holding of land which would be liable to provide him with a knight and his proper attendants for service in war. Further, when Henry was planning a distant expedition to Toulouse in 1159, he enlarged the practice by permitting his barons to pay a fine instead of accompanying him in person, and with the money thus obtained he hired soldiers. In this way the king got a better army, and the barons became weaker. As they often preferred to stay at home, they grew less warlike and their vassals less skilled in arms. If they were to rebel they would find the king with a disciplined force, while they themselves had only a band of ill-trained and discontented followers. In this way "scutage" did much to weaken feudalism in England.

The other of Henry's military measures falls at the end of his reign; but it deserves notice here as it too helped to destroy the warlike powers of the barons. By the "Assize of Arms", in 1181, he revived the old Saxon army of the "fyrd", that national levy of all between the ages of sixteen and sixty. Since the Norman men-at-arms had ridden down the flying Saxon footmen at Hastings, the feudal array had been favoured and the "fyrd" despised. It was the day of heavy cavalry: infantry were held of small account. None the less the "fyrd" had been called out at times of pressing need, and had done good service both against the Scots, and against rebellious barons in 1173-4. The Assize of Arms laid down that every freeman was to possess certain weapons, and these were to be inspected at intervals to see they were in good order. This force of freemen was the origin of our militia. Henceforth the king had two armies—a small force of paid and trained soldiers for service abroad, and a militia to defend England against the foreign invader or rebellious barons. Thus the old feudal levy was less and less needed. Feudalism by degrees lost its military character, became less dangerous to the Crown, and sank into a method of holding land.

Scutage.

Assize of Arms, 1181.

Revival of the "fyrd".

One of the greatest marks of the disorder of Stephen's time

<sup>1</sup> i.e. a "shield tax".

had been the increase of feudal jurisdictions, the growth, that is to say, of barons' courts, in which the king's law was set aside by a baron's private regulations. In days when communication through the country was difficult and slow, there was always trouble in keeping the local courts connected with the central courts. It was to tighten this connection that sheriffs (royal officers) had been placed over the shire courts, while Henry I had sent round from the exchequer "travelling barons" who, first attending to matters of revenue, dealt also with matters of law. But while under King Stephen each did what was right in his own eyes, the connection between the central and local courts had almost perished. Henry II set himself to bring the local courts again under royal control. Unless the king's law ran through the length and breadth of the land, the king's power would be but a shadow.

The illegal baronial courts could easily be destroyed by the hand that was strong enough to pull down the illegal baronial castles. But something had to be put in their place: it is generally far easier to destroy than to construct. And the fact that Henry succeeded in his constructive measures does far more to prove him a great statesman than any of his purely destructive work.

Instead of attempting to make anything new, Henry took hold of a Saxon institution and bent it to a new shape. As we have seen, Saxon justice had been accustomed to the idea of an association of men who *represented* their district, whether it was the shire or the hundred, either to give information on oath, or to do justice. Representatives of the "tunmoots" sat in the hundred courts; representatives of the hundred in the shire courts; Domesday Book itself had been based on the evidence collected from sworn representatives. And it was from this idea of representation that Henry developed the jury system.

The first step was the revival of his grandfather's plan of sending judges from the king's court to the local courts. These justices *in eyre*<sup>1</sup> still combined a care for the revenue with the task of bringing the king's justice home to all. But an important step forward

Revival  
of royal  
justice.

Idea of repre-  
sentatives.

Justices in eyre  
and jury of  
presentment.

<sup>1</sup> An abbreviation of *in itinere* (on circuit).



was taken by the Assize of Clarendon in 1166, when it was ordered that these justices were to be met in each county by twelve legal men from the hundred, and four from the tithing, who were to "present" to them notorious malefactors. These persons did not indeed try the accused: they formed a jury "of presentment" (the origin of the modern "grand jury"), whose task it is to decide whether a man ought to be tried for any offence. The real trial was by the ordeal of water,<sup>1</sup> and if the accused failed to get through that he was condemned. Yet even when he came off triumphant from the Ordeal, he was to leave the country within forty days. If the case against him was so strong that the sworn men "presented" him for trial, he was at any rate an undesirable person to keep in the country.

This use of a jury, as laid down in the Assize of Clarendon, and repeated in the Assize of Northampton (1176), applied only to criminal matters. But in civil cases too a jury might be employed, though only as an alternative. The other choice, however, was the Norman scheme of "trial by battle", and among the lower people this was disliked, not only because it was un-English (for it was not a native institution), but because it gave an overwhelming advantage to the man best trained in arms, and so was hideously unfair. In the eyes of men of simple faith "thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just"; but such simplicity of faith was rare, for the very good reason that its belief so often led to the wrong man winning the day. If all that justice can do is to declare that "might is right", then justice may as well stand aside altogether, for the same end will be reached without its meddling. As a substitute for this barbarous plan, the system of settling civil cases by a jury, cumbrous and expensive as it was at first, since it involved taking the case to the King's Court at Westminster, proved to be the beginning of a valuable reform.

The conclusion of the matter lies outside the reign of Henry II; but as he was the father of the English jury, it is well to join with his name the perfecting of the work he began. From ad-

<sup>1</sup> The accused had to dip his hand into boiling water and take out a stone from the bottom of the vessel. The hand was then tied up for a time (usually seven days), and if, when the bandages were taken off, it was found to be healed, the man was held acquitted.

mitting that after all Might was not Right, it was but a short step to agree that Chance was not Justice. Trial by battle fell

into disuse, and soon afterwards trial by Ordeal followed it. In 1216 the Church forbade the further

use of Ordeal, and in its place came the "petty jury", a body of twelve men drawn from the neighbourhood, who were to deliver a verdict<sup>1</sup> on the charge before them. At first they were chosen for their presumed knowledge of the accused's crime; and if they could not agree, others were added till twelve were found of one mind. It was only by slow degrees that the functions of witness and jurymen were kept apart; and for a long time the accused could not call witnesses for himself, or have anyone to defend him, since the jury, being themselves witnesses, were supposed to know all there was to be known without outside assistance: but, imperfect as the jury was in its beginnings, it grew till it became one of the greatest safeguards of English liberty.

Hitherto we have seen nothing but Henry's triumphs: we have seen him strike down disorder as personified by the barons; we

have seen him strengthen and widen the royal justice till it became so formidable that the proudest noble

dared not defy it, and so far-reaching that the meanest freeman could be sure of its protection. But there was yet one body over which the royal justice had no authority. It is Henry's attempt to enforce his authority over the Church that must next occupy us.

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## XI. Monarchy and Church: Henry and Becket

The quarrel between Henry II and Becket had its roots deep in the past. To understand it we must trace the history of the dealings of the Crown with the Church since that Norman Conquest which had made so many great changes in England.

We have already spoken of that school of Cluniac monks

<sup>1</sup> i.e. a "true saying".

which had striven to set up a purer standard of life and duty in the Church.<sup>1</sup> One result of their efforts has been already remarked—the increased reputation of the monks who led strict lives, and the decline from favour of secular and parish clergy, who were less particular.

Objects of  
the Cluniac  
Reformers.

But it is necessary to examine the objects of the Cluniacs more deeply. They saw with alarm that churchmen were every year becoming more involved in affairs of the world, more occupied with the administering of wide estates and the gathering of riches, more concerned with the cares of state, more interested in keeping themselves on an equality with the great nobles. They felt that the world was mastering the spirit, the thorns choking the wheat. It was needful to cut off this connection with the world. Thus they strove to make the clergy *celibate*, because they thought that marriage entangled men in worldly concerns; they cried out against the offence of *simony*, because when men could buy promotion or office in the church, they were led to covet riches, or be unduly influenced by them; and (though this came later) they objected to churchmen receiving offices at the hands of laymen. *Lay investiture*, as this was called, was an abuse, because it was likely that laymen were often guided in their choice by unworthy reasons. Churchmen would be appointed to livings, preferments, bishoprics, and so forth, not for their zeal or piety, but because they were popular and easy-going; they would thus be tempted to work for the favour of men, not for the cause of God.

All of the Cluniac aims were laudable in themselves, and to the first two no objection could reasonably be raised. That the clergy should be celibate was an old rule which had been somewhat loosely kept, and clerical marriages caused great scandal. Simony was an offence that the Church had long battled with, having complete right on its side. But to attack lay investiture was another and a novel matter. The Cluniacs wished to cut the Church loose from all lay control, to make it a body apart, independent, an *imperium in imperio*. But the fact was that the greater churchmen, the bishops and abbots, held large masses of landed property. Herein lay the wealth of their sees and foundations; and as landowners they

Difficulties in  
the way of  
abolishing lay  
investiture.

<sup>1</sup> See page 39.



owed duties to the state like other landowners. They had no claim to escape taxation or the task of sending tenants to fight in the field. If the Cluniac reformers wished the Church to be entirely free from the world, the Church must abandon the wealth that bound it to the world. This, of course, it had no intention of doing.

The most distinguished of the Cluniac reformers was Hildebrand, who, after being the trusted adviser of two popes, became himself Pope in 1073, under the title of Gregory VII.

Hildebrand  
(Gregory VII)  
and William I.

He entered with immense vigour on the work of making the Church independent of all kings and princes. He even claimed the right of excommunicating and deposing those who defied him. He embarked in a desperate quarrel with the Emperor, Henry IV, which lasted all their lives, and survived them to convulse Europe for many years after they were dead.

Oddly enough, Gregory never quarrelled with William the Conqueror, although William was in the habit of "investing" his own bishops, and had declared that no Pope's bulls or decrees should be obeyed in England unless he himself gave leave. Even when Gregory demanded homage, and William had refused, because no king of England had ever paid it before, Gregory gave way. He probably did so because he saw in William a king who, unlike most of the kings of the time, was really trying to improve his Church. And William, too, had, of his own accord, taken a step which must have delighted Gregory. When he came to the throne, he had found the bishops accustomed

William estab-  
lishes Church  
Courts in  
England.

to sit in the Shire Courts, and having churchmen and ecclesiastical offenders tried before them there, just like laymen, and under the same law. William had withdrawn the bishops from the Shire Courts: he had replaced the English bishops by Normans; and he had permitted them to have courts of their own in which they tried and punished their own offenders under their own "canon" law. Church matters which had hitherto been discussed by a mixture of laymen and churchmen in the Witan were now transferred to a synod in which laymen had no place. And as William had also appointed Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury, and sup-

ported him in his efforts to make the clergy put away their wives and do their duty, Gregory may well have felt that it would be a mistake to quarrel with him, even though he did refuse homage and claim to appoint bishops himself.

William Rufus, however, proved equally obstinate and far less honest of purpose. He was intensely greedy of money, and he and his Justiciar, Ranulf Flambard, strained every means to amass it. Under the feudal system large payments were always due to the feudal superior, in many cases the king, when one of his tenants died. There were *heriots* to be taken from the dead man's estate, and *reliefs* to be paid by the heir: if the heir was a minor, the administration of his estate came into the king's hands, and good profits might be drawn from it. Rufus and Flambard cast covetous eyes on the Church. Church lands did not pay heriots or reliefs, but if when an office fell vacant, it were not filled at once, the king might easily lay hands on the revenue that came in during the vacancy. Hence arose a practice of keeping offices vacant for a considerable time. This gross abuse came to a head in 1089, when Lanfranc died, and no successor was appointed to his Archbishopric. Four years passed away, and, to the scandal of everyone, the Church in England was still left without a head, in order that the king might pocket its revenues.

William II's  
quarrel with  
Anselm.

In 1093 Rufus fell sick, and, believing himself to be dying, he wished to make his peace with Heaven. Accordingly he appointed Anselm, Abbot of Bec, to the Archbishopric. However unworthy the motive, the choice was excellent. Anselm won the respect of all by his learning, righteousness, and tenderness. As it happened, however, William did not die, and as his health grew better, his conduct grew worse; penitence soon vanished; blasphemous and brutal habits returned. From the first Anselm had foreseen that there was trouble in store for him. "Will you yoke me, a weak old sheep, with that fierce young bull, the King of England," said he, when he was first offered the primacy. But, though so modest, Anselm would never yield to threats. He refused to make Rufus any payment for his appointment, but gave the money in charity instead. When Pope Urban sent over the "pall", or scarf of office, Anselm would not receive

it at the king's hands, but took it himself from the high altar at Canterbury. He rebuked the misdoings of the king and the Court, and so angered William that his life was scarcely safe. He had at length to leave the kingdom.

One of Henry I's earliest and most popular acts was to recall Anselm from his exile. But though Henry was reasonable and just, yet even he could not agree with Anselm. Their dispute never ripened into a quarrel, none the less it was a hot dispute. Indeed agreement was scarce possible, for Anselm had been at Rome and had returned more than ever strong against lay investiture. When first appointed by Rufus he had paid homage, but he now refused this homage to Henry; and when Henry invested bishops he would not consecrate them. Yet Henry could not allow his archbishops and bishops to be altogether independent of him, for churchmen in those days were among the greatest landowners; if they claimed to be invested by the Pope they would soon claim to hold not only their spiritual powers, but also their lands, from the Pope. If they did so, England would be split up between laymen owning, as Englishmen, allegiance to an English king, and churchmen, of no nationality, only owning a foreigner, the Pope, as their master. No king could suffer this.

Here we come, not to a quarrel between two men, but a divergence between two great institutions. The Church was advancing claims which the Crown could not grant. It was only the first of a long series; we shall see the difference at times widen, at times almost close up, but it was never quite healed, and it eventually led to the great breach which we call the Reformation.

In this matter of investitures there was a good deal to be said on both sides. Henry and Anselm settled it in a reasonable way by a compromise. Bishops and abbots were to be chosen by their cathedral chapter and by their monks respectively, but the election was to be held in the king's court. They were to receive the ring which stood for their union with their flock, and the pastoral staff which represented the shepherd's care over his sheep, from the Church, because these things were symbols of their spiritual power; but

Recall of  
Anselm by  
Henry I.

Compromise  
about investi-  
tures.



they were to pay homage for their worldly possessions to the king, who was their master in respect of the world. This compromise worked well, and was afterwards adopted by the Pope and emperor as the right settlement of their dispute also.

King Stephen's reign is bare of any ecclesiastical dispute. Stephen certainly quarrelled with his bishops, and found that they were strong enough to do him much harm, but the quarrel was not about church matters. None the less his reign witnessed an increase in the power of the Church. While the barons were fighting with their king and each other, the Church was steadily working towards that independence from lay control which it desired.

Thus Henry II had to fight the matter over again, though this time on new ground, and the struggle was even more violent than in William II's day. For, though Henry had reason on his side, which William had not, yet the one king was fully as hot-tempered and impatient as the other, while on the side of the Church, instead of the gentle, patient Anselm, stood Becket, at least as fiery, wilful, and rash of speech as his royal master.

Henry II  
and Becket.

Not the least irritating of Becket's qualities in the king's eyes was his apparent ingratitude. Henry had raised Becket from an obscure station. He had made a personal friend of him, had joked and feasted in his company, had made him his Chancellor, and consulted with him on all the measures needed to bring the realm into order, and believed him to be heart and soul with him. Thus, when the Archbishopric of Canterbury fell vacant, giving the king the chance of putting in a man to forward his ideas, none seemed so suitable as Becket. Becket objected. "If this be done," said he, "our friendship will soon turn to bitter hate." Yet the king persisted in his idea that Becket would prove even more useful as Archbishop than he had been as Chancellor.

Becket's  
character  
and early  
career.

Once consecrated, Becket made clear immediately that he would prove as stout a supporter of the Church's privileges as any churchman could wish. He resigned his Chancellorship, justifying himself with the words, "Man cannot serve two

masters". This was but a foretaste of the mixture of zeal and want of tact which was to distinguish the rest of his career. He might have made plain his wish henceforth to serve God without likening the service of his royal master and friend to that of Mammon. But Becket never did anything by halves. Hitherto, though he had always led an honest life, he had been careless, luxurious, worldly; suddenly he turned into an ascetic of the severest type, fasting with extreme rigour, wearing a hair-shirt, washing the feet of the sick and the poor. Men scoffed at the courtier who had become a monk. Yet Becket's change was no hypocrisy. He was a man who had taken up a new duty, and he meant to perform it with all his might. The fact that in doing so he would come into collision with the king did not turn him aside for a moment.

We recall that Henry II's chief aim was to destroy all those privileges and immunities which hindered the king's law; we know that owing to William I's change the Church was the one really great institution which still held these privileges; we can see that it was inevitably over this point that the battle would arise.

The provocation was not long in coming. Becket became Archbishop in 1162. In 1163 a cleric committed a particularly atrocious murder, but had been dismissed from an ecclesiastical court almost unpunished.<sup>1</sup> Henry, angry at this gross failure of justice, required that the clergy should obey the "customs of the realm". To this Becket verbally agreed, but as the "customs" were not very certain, a commission was appointed to draw them up. This commission produced the celebrated *Constitutions of Clarendon*. Some old rules were repeated; clerics were not to leave the king's realm without his leave, and appeals were not to be taken to Rome, but to be heard before the king: the agreement made between Henry I and Anselm about investitures and homage was re-enacted: a new order was made that villeins might not enter the service of the Church without leave of their lords. But the gist of the matter was that clerics who had committed crimes—"criminous clerks"—having been

<sup>1</sup> He was ordered to abstain from the Sacrament for two years.

tried in the ecclesiastical courts *and degraded from their orders* (as they would be, if found guilty), should be then handed over to the king's courts for sentence. There was no idea of the king's courts sentencing a *clerk*: Having been degraded he would be no longer a clerk but a layman.

We might think this of small consequence; we wonder why clerics should object to the royal justice, and why the king should distrust Church courts; we presume that the number of clerics who commit crimes would be very small. Such notions are misleading.

The king was in no way hostile to the Church courts as such. All he was striving for was to bring all criminals alike under the ordinary law, and to destroy all exemptions. But there was strong reason why the Church courts should not deal with crimes. They had no power of life and death. Their punishments were limited to ordering penances, which, however severe, could not meet cases of murder. The result was an inequality of justice. A layman who murdered was hanged; a cleric was merely degraded and put to penance. Again, we are led to wonder why churchmen, who at this time especially were anxious to purify and raise their order, should desire to protect their guilty members. The explanation lies in the same desire which we have noticed before: to sever their order from the lay world, and exalt it by the severance. If a cleric were degraded from his orders, this, they held, should be punishment enough. If he were submitted to the ordinary courts, it would be an admission that he was no better than an ordinary man, and he would be punished twice for the same offence.

Inadequacy of  
Church courts  
in criminal  
matters.

Lastly, the number of "criminous clerks" was large, because the term "cleric" included a far larger class than it does nowadays. It embraced not only what we call the clergy, but all sorts of men in "minor orders" — exorcists, acolites, readers, sacristans, subdeacons—all who were engaged in the service of the Church, or who were intending to enter its orders, and had taken what was called the first tonsure. It was as if we were now to extend the term "clergy" to all the officials of a cathedral—the vergers and beadles, the singing men in the choir, and so forth. All the clerks of the king's Chancery

Wide sig-  
nification  
of term  
"cleric".



were clerics. Indeed, for all practical purposes, all the professional classes, except soldiers and lawyers, were clerics. To some of these their orders meant little, save an exemption from the royal courts and a certainty of light punishment in cases of misdoing. Consequently clerical offenders, so far from being rare, were extraordinarily numerous. And as the Church courts claimed to try not only cases where a cleric was the accused party, but also any case in which a cleric was concerned, the number of cases withdrawn from the royal courts and dealt with by courts that could not inflict meet punishment was exceedingly large.

The issue, then, between Henry and his Archbishop, was of wide concern to both sides, and it was hotly fought out with whatever weapons each could find. Becket had given a vague assent in advance to the Constitutions before he saw them. When he saw them he strove to be allowed to qualify his words by adding, "saving the privileges of our order". The king would not accept this, since it offered Becket a loophole to escape from all rules, and after six days of stormy debate Becket withdrew his assent. Summoned again to a council at Northampton, Becket appeared in full robes clasping a crucifix: it was as if a baron had stalked in with visor down and drawn sword, an act of defiance. The king brought against him a series of charges relating to his conduct as Chancellor, and demanded an account of the moneys that had passed through his hands. Becket lost his temper and behaved so violently that the Bishop of London called him a fool to his face. But neither the rage of the king nor the disgust of his clerical brethren daunted Becket. He left the assembly declared a traitor. "This is a fearful day", said one of his trembling followers. "Ay," retorted Thomas, "but the Day of Judgment will be more fearful." He fled from the town at dead of night, and escaped to France.

Then began six years of incessant struggle, in which Becket revived old disputes, among them that about investitures. He sought help from Pope Alexander III, but Alexander himself, being persecuted by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, dared not affront Henry by supporting Becket too warmly. Henry,

on the other hand, pursued the fight vigorously by seizing the revenues of Canterbury. Becket replied by excommunicating Henry's ministers and bishops, and so the fight went on.

At last, in 1170, a truce was made, and Becket returned to the kingdom on the understanding that he was to let bygones be bygones. Unluckily, just before his return, Henry had caused his son to be crowned. To crown a king was a privilege of the Archbishops of Canterbury, but as Becket was in disgrace Henry had made Becket's enemies, Roger of York and the Bishop of London, perform the ceremony. Becket, on his return, excommunicated them both. This threw Henry into one of his violent rages. All the trouble taken to have his son crowned was wasted through Becket's act. On hearing the news, Henry cried out: "Are there none of the dastards eating my bread who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" Immediately four knights started for England, resolved to carry out the king's wish by some means, fair or foul. After a stormy interview with Becket in his palace, they followed him armed into the cathedral. Coarse words passed, and Becket retorted no less coarsely. A scuffle began, and Becket flung one of the knights, De Tracy, to the ground. De Tracy drew his sword; the rest did the same, and the Archbishop was murdered on his own altar steps.

Return of  
Becket,  
and his  
murder,  
1170.

Becket died in a brawl, and straightway became a martyr. If ever a dead man won a fight, it was he. Henry, who had many advantages of reason and justice on his side, lost them all by his own frantic words and the more frantic interpretation which De Tracy and his companions placed on them. Henceforward the one thing to do was to yield. He swore his innocence, and at a later date even submitted to be scourged by the monks of Canterbury at Becket's tomb. But all hope of asserting his rights over the Church courts was gone. Not till the Reformation did the royal power prevail. For more than three centuries criminous clerks continued to be sentenced in their own courts, and appeals went to Rome; and, what was even more serious, the door was opened to fresh inroads by the popes. The humbling of King John, the plunder-

Ruin of the  
Royal cause  
against the  
Church.

ing taxation of Henry III's day, was indirectly due to Becket's martyrdom.

And for the rest of Henry's life, trouble was ever hard at hand. The great barons who had trembled before him lost their respect for a king who had been worsted by the Church. Men like Hugh of Chester, Hugh Bigod, and Robert Mowbray were very ready to rebel against a king whose life's work had been spent in the effort to tame their powers. His children, too, plotted against him. Even his wife deserted him. Rebellion was soon on foot both in England and oversea. The Scots poured over the border. The King of France gave help to the rebels. From this accumulation of dangers Henry seemed scarce likely to escape, yet he had stout friends, and the people of England stood by him. They at least had no wish to see the barons lift their heads again. Thus, by the aid of his militia the rebel Earls of Leicester and Norfolk were beaten in the Battle of Fornham, and the peasantry took care that none of the fugitives escaped alive. The King of Scots, William the Lion, was surprised and made prisoner at Alnwick. He was not allowed to go until he had, by the Treaty of Falaise, paid homage to the King of England as his feudal superior, and put in his hands the castles of Edinburgh, Stirling, Roxburgh, Jedburgh, and Berwick (1174). Abroad, Henry with his army of mercenaries soon forced the French king to sue for peace.

Yet, even so, the old king had little rest. His sons quarrelled like young lions over the division of his inheritance. The eldest, Henry, till his death in 1183, plotted constantly with the kings of France against his father. Geoffrey provoked his barons in Brittany to incessant quarrels till death too removed him. Richard took up his elder brother's game, joined the King of France, actually led an army against his father, and forced him to make a degrading peace. The last blow was the discovery that his youngest, his favourite son, John, had joined the rebellion. Smitten with fever, the old king turned his face to the wall, murmuring "Shame, shame on a conquered king", and so passed away.

Rebellions of  
Henry's sons and  
great barons.

Death of  
Henry II,  
1189.



## XII. The Angevin Power: Richard and the Crusades

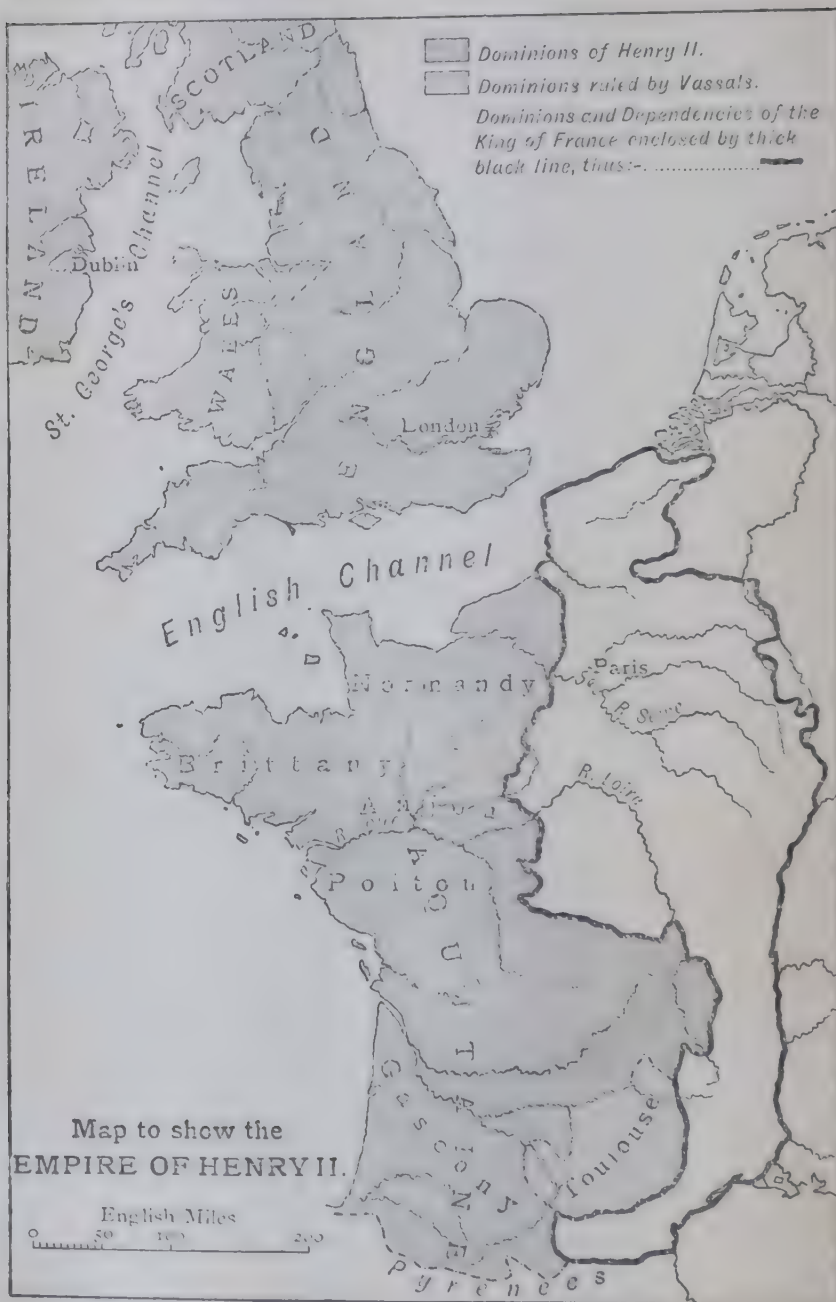
Amid the engrossing importance of what Henry did at home we have had little leisure to attend to what Henry was abroad. Yet in the eyes of any but an Englishman, Henry was of greater consequence as a European ruler than as an English king. Through his father he ruled Anjou; through his mother, Normandy; through his wife, Aquitaine, being thus master of the western half of France:<sup>1</sup> we have also seen that by the accident which threw William the Lion into his hands he established his claim to be considered paramount over Scotland; and we may add, what has hitherto been passed over, that he had in a sense conquered Ireland. Adrian IV, the only Englishman who ever was a Pope, was ready to grant Henry a licence to conquer Ireland (the Papacy claiming dominion over all islands) if Henry would agree to hold it as a papal fief. This did not suit the king. He declined Adrian's terms, but later proceeded with the conquest on his own authority. It was not difficult to find an opportunity. The country had never united, but was still split up among rival kings. One of these, Dermot, King of Leinster, was driven from Ireland by Roderic O'Connor, who claimed kingship over the whole island. Dermot fled to England and sought aid from Henry II. Henry, too busy to undertake the task himself, allowed Dermot to get what help he could from the barons. These were ready enough for any adventure, and one of them, Richard de Clare, sometimes called Strongbow, helped Dermot to rout his enemies—not a very difficult task, for the mailed Norman warrior was a match for a number of ill-armed Irish—and by marrying Dermot's heiress succeeded to his kingdom on Dermot's death. Henry, somewhat alarmed lest his vassals should become independent, crossed over to Ireland. A satisfactory number of Irish kings

Henry's  
continental  
power.

The conquest  
of Ireland.

Strongbow.

<sup>1</sup> The marriage of his son, Geoffrey, with Constance of Brittany brought this duchy into the Angevin power, and made Henry II's dominions extend from the Somme to the Pyrenees in a continuous line.



paid him homage, and meant nothing by it. As a matter of fact his authority stretched no farther than the Normans could conquer, namely, the district round Dublin and Wexford, called the English "pale". Beyond that the Irish ruled and quarrelled as before, but Henry had at any rate added a new title. He was Lord of Ireland.

So powerful a sovereign was not likely to lack suitable marriages for his daughters. One married Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, another married the King of Castile. Thus the family, sprung from the counts of the little province of Anjou, had gained a position in Europe not unlike that won in later days by the counts of an obscure Austrian territory of Hapsburg. But there was another branch of the Angevins, which had acquired by marriage a title to the kingdom of Jerusalem; and to the story of the Crusades and of the part which the Angevin Richard Cœur de Lion played in them we must now turn.

Marriage  
alliances.

The Crusades.

In the year 635 Jerusalem, hitherto belonging to the Christian Empire of the East, had fallen into the hands of the Arabs, but the way to the holy places had not been shut by this conquest. Christian pilgrims had been allowed to come and go at all seasons, and especially to the great Easter Fair at Jerusalem, with no other hindrance than the payment of the usual tolls which travellers always paid in alien lands. In the eleventh century, however, a fresh horde of Eastern invaders swept over Syria, of a fiercer type than the Arabs. These were the Seljuk Turks. When they conquered Jerusalem in 1076 they began a policy of persecution. Christians were robbed, insulted, sometimes murdered. A pilgrim who visited the Holy Land did so at the risk of his life.

Fall of Jerusalem, 635.

Stories of Turkish brutality flowed westwards and fell on ears open to catch them. It is easy to misunderstand and even to resent that policy of the Church, which aimed at setting it free from the control of kings, striving to exalt the Pope at their expense, but that is partly because we look at it from the modern standpoint of the *nation*. To a Briton, or a Frenchman, or a German, his own nation is everything; "Europe" is but a name. But in the eleventh century the idea of nationality



was vague. At the time England had scarcely emerged from being a conquered people, and France was divided, Spain was divided, Italy was divided, Germany was divided. There were no "nations" as we know them. All European monarchs, instead of regarding themselves as separate heads of separate nations, thought of themselves as members of one great body—"Christendom". And Christendom had badges of unity, its temporal head the Emperor, its spiritual head the Pope—the twin champions of Christendom. "Behold here are Two Swords"; at times one sword was turned against the other, but against the infidel both could unite. As it was a matter touching the faith, the popes should take the lead. To do them justice they did not shrink from the task. And it was no light task to end the jarring wars of greed and selfishness at home, and send forth men of all races, to fight side by side for Christendom.

There was another motive besides zeal for the faith on which the popes could rely: this was the spirit of adventure. To undertake a difficult and dangerous enterprise, to rescue the downtrodden, to go where blows fell thickest, even though the reward was but empty renown, was the duty of the knight, the spirit of what a later age called "chivalry". And so when, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, Peter the Hermit preached the Crusade, he had no lack, not merely of hearers, but doers, of the Word. Some in impetuous zeal even hurried off unarmed, a mere rabble, and perished by the way, but they were followed by a disciplined force including the bravest knights in Christendom. Jerusalem was taken in 1099, and Godfrey de Bouillon was chosen as its king. Unhappily the mere love of fighting had mastered other feelings in the Crusaders' hearts. Even a good and virtuous knight like Godfrey, too pious to wear a crown of gold where once Christ had worn a crown of thorns, had no spirit of mercy. He, like the rest, regarded himself as an avenger. Without shrinking, he took his share in the hideous massacres, even of women and children, that followed the storming of Jerusalem. And this pitiless fury turned too against the Jews. Not merely in Palestine, but in distant parts of Europe, they were plundered

The policy of Christendom against the infidel.

The first Crusade, 1099.

of blood and treasure; the capture of Acre alone was said to have cost 300,000 men.

Richard was now to reap the harvest of his quarrels. One enemy had already gone home: it was indeed the news of John's intrigues with the French king which decided Richard that, if he wished to retain the Crown of England, he could no longer battle in Palestine.

Richard's captivity and release.

But he had made a deadly foe of another Crusader. He had found Leopold of Austria's banner set above his own. He had caused it to be flung down with ignominy. Leopold bided his time, and the chance for revenge came when, on his return home, Richard was shipwrecked on the coasts of the Adriatic, and, trying to cross Austria in disguise, fell a prisoner into Leopold's hands. How Leopold sold him to the Emperor Henry VI, who also owed him a grudge for his conduct in Sicily, and how Henry held him captive for four months till a ransom was paid, is too well known to need more words. The whole episode offers an instructive comment on the hopeless selfishness which underlay the third Crusade. The enterprise begun for the rescue of the Holy City ended with the selling of one Christian monarch by another.

With Richard's difficulties after his return we have now no concern. From Richard's day English crusading zeal dwindled. It is true that in 1240 Henry III's brother led an expedition to Palestine, and got a favourable treaty from the Sultan, and Edward I while still prince, after his overthrow of Simon de Montfort, also took the cross, distinguished himself by capturing Nazareth, and indeed nearly lost his life there by a stab from a poisoned dagger. But none of these expeditions were comparable in scale to Richard's. Never again did an English king leave his realm to go crusading.

Decline of crusading spirit.

It remains to notice a few of the effects of the Crusades. They removed from England a number of the most turbulent and dangerous barons. Some of these never came home; those who did return had often sold much of their possessions in order to find the money to pay their expenses, and so found themselves weakened. Robert of Normandy pledged his dukedom to his brother, and lost it; Richard himself

Effects of the Crusades.

jocularly declared, "I would have sold London itself, if I could have found a rich enough buyer". He did sell all he could, including the rights to the payment of homage by Scottish kings. What Henry had won by the Treaty of Falaise, Richard suffered William the Lion to buy back again. In this time of general sale many made good bargains, and none better than townsmen.

**Towns buy freedom.**

Hitherto towns had been mostly under the control of some lord, either the king or a baron, on whose domain the town stood; they were ruled by his sheriff or bailiff; they were liable to pay his dues. Many of the towns took advantage of the Crusades to buy charters, which relieved them of this control. Henceforth they were free, having their government in their own hands, able to impose and collect their own dues, and make their own rules for the conduct of trade. In this way the Crusades gave a great stimulus to the development of our towns.

They encouraged trade also. The crusading armies opened new trade routes, or reopened old ones long blocked. Men grew

**New trade routes.**

familiar with the more refined civilization of the East, and on their return desired to have Eastern goods and Eastern luxuries in their Western homes. All this led to a new intercourse between East and West, which had results far more solid than the erratic exploits of the Crusaders. But this commercial prosperity affected England little. It centred round the Mediterranean ports, and England, in its northern isolation, lay in those days far from the world's highway.

The choice of Richard as a national hero-king is not a little curious. A hero of a sort he certainly was: he possessed the strength of limb, the skill with his weapons, the reckless courage, which were the chief glories of the knight errant, the ideal of that age. In addition, he was personally popular. He was fond of songs and jests, being himself a fair musician and gifted with a ready wit, as may be seen from his reply to the Pope, who claimed as "his son" a bishop who had been taken prisoner while fighting in a battle. Richard sent the Pope the bishop's coat of mail with the pointed inquiry, "Know now whether this be thy son's coat, or no". He was not haughty unless he was affronted, and though his temper was

**Character of Richard I.**



blazing hot, he forgave as readily as he flew into wrath, and these sudden pardons, these unlooked-for escapes from the lion's jaws, were so unexpected as to win him a character for clemency. He was open and simple, and the ruler who never puzzles his subjects is generally liked. But with all these qualities he was essentially not English; he had very little English blood in him; he took little interest in England, save that her men made good fighters. He only spent ten months in England out of the ten years which he reigned. When he came back from the Crusades he plunged into wars in France, and he met an appropriate death, being mortally wounded by an arrow from the Castle of Chaluz, which he was besieging in order to get from his vassal a treasure which had been discovered there. It is characteristic of him that he forgave on his deathbed Bertrand de Gourdon, the man who fired the shot, and equally characteristic of his time that one of his mercenary captains kept Bertrand in prison till Richard had passed away, and then flayed him alive. But though Richard's connection with England was so flimsy, he has won in romance the same national admiration which has centred in Scotland on a queen who was equally foreign. Richard of England and Mary Queen of Scots were by birth, upbringing, and tastes both French.

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### XIII. John and Magna Carta

The long period covered by the reigns of John and Henry III possesses one strongly marked character throughout. It was an age of bad government. John was oppressive, Henry <sup>John and</sup> was feeble: both alike were unsatisfactory. In each <sup>Henry III.</sup> case the barons interfered to set matters right. Thus in both reigns there was great progress made in the building up of our peculiar English Constitution in its most essential features: (1) the right of the whole nation to settle its own affairs by means of a Representative Assembly; and (2) the responsibility of the king's

ministers, not to the king, but to Parliament. Putting the matter more shortly, the thirteenth century is the age of the Making of

Parliament. And it is further remarkable that Par-

liament, itself the product of the weakness of two kings, is confirmed by the policy of a third king who was good and strong. Edward I might have used his strength to destroy the infant Parliament; on the contrary, he fostered it.

We have spoken of Parliament as the product of the badness and weakness of two kings, and throughout we shall notice that,

**Opportunities of Parliament.** as a general rule, the Constitution develops most when the Crown is for any reason ineffective. A bad ruler provokes those efforts to restrain the absolute royal power which we call constitutional government. A weak ruler gives the opportunity for them. And as the power of Parliament grew at the expense of the royal authority, it is obvious that, as a rule, when one is vigorous the other will be languid, and vice versa. Exceptions will occur when a strong king encourages Parliament to be very courageous, or when both king and Parliament are united in one policy, or when both alike are weak because some other body in the state has the mastery over them. We have examples of the first phase in the reigns of Edward I and Henry V, for both kings encouraged Parliament; Henry VII and Henry VIII illustrate the second phase, for in their days King and Parliament agreed; the third phase may be observed in the reign of Henry VI, where neither King nor Parliament could control the barons. But ordinarily Parliament, in its early history, is only remarkable when it is striving to abridge the power of the Crown; and its opportunity comes when the Crown is either misusing its power, or has temporarily lost it.

From the accession of Richard to the accession of Edward I — a period of over eighty years—the Crown was, from one cause

or another, less strong. Richard was much absent from England, and left his powers to men acting as regents; John was vicious, and provoked a general rebellion; Henry III was a boy only nine years old, and his reign began with a long minority, during which regents governed in his name. Even when he grew up he proved to be feeble and

**Weakness of Crown,**  
1189 1272.

extravagant, and he trusted in favourites who misgoverned the realm so as to provoke a second rebellion much like that which John provoked. Thus these eighty years were unusually favourable to the growth of any body that could control and reform the royal power; and each of the rebellions—that of 1215, and that of 1264—marks a very important step in the growth of our Constitution.

From his birth John had been the curse of all who had to deal with him. The youngest of Henry II's sons, he was at first portionless: hence his name "Lackland", a title which became more appropriate when his folly lost the English possessions in Normandy. His father, who gave him a love he did not in the least deserve, quarrelled with his other sons in the effort to find dominions to give him. He was sent to Ireland that he might conciliate the Irish tributary kings, but he only insulted them by his rude behaviour. He plotted with the King of France against his father, and by his treachery brought his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. Richard knew what manner of brother he was leaving behind him. He tried to bind John by gratitude, bestowing nearly a third of the realm on him, and making him swear not to visit England for three years. John had as little respect for gratitude as he had for an oath. Richard had scarce been gone a year when John came back into England, quarrelled with the justiciar, Longchamp, and began to rule in his own possessions like a king. The news of his brother's captivity tempted him further. He acted as if Richard were dead and himself monarch: he did homage for Normandy to Philip, defying Richard's officers, and gathering a party round himself to support him even should Richard return. When Richard was at last ransomed, he would have had justice on his side had he put John to death as a traitor; but he despised the slippery prince too much to fear him. John, by a show of submission, made his peace; he was clever enough to appreciate the value of the advice in which Philip Augustus told him that his brother was once more at liberty—"The devil is unchained: take care of yourself". Richard gave him back none of his estates, so that for the rest of the reign he was powerless.

John,  
1189-1199.

His treachery  
to Richard I.



With his brother's sudden death, however, came John's opportunity. He had very little difficulty in succeeding to all Richard's wide dominions. Normandy, Maine, and Anjou all acknowledged him as king. His mother Eleanor secured Poitou and Guienne for him, while the chief barons in England, with the Archbishop and the Justiciar at their head, declared him to be rightful king in England. It is not surprising that the hereditary claims of his nephew Arthur of Brittany were set aside, for, untrustworthy as John had proved himself, he was a man, and Arthur was a boy unsuited to be a king. Moreover, Arthur's father Geoffrey had been the most unpopular of all Henry II's sons, and the choice of John as the elder male relation of the dead king was only following what had been done before. We owe our best as well as our worst king to the same principle. King Alfred succeeded by the same title as King John.

It is important to distinguish in John's reign the successive steps by which he managed to lose the support of all branches of his subjects: first, how he suffered his domains in France to be taken from him; secondly, how he affronted the Church; thirdly, how by his submission to the Pope and by oppressive government at home he irritated not only the barons, but all Englishmen, gentle and simple alike, to join in a general attack on him.

Having an enemy in France, Arthur of Brittany, it was clearly John's policy to keep friendly with Philip Augustus, King of France, lest that monarch should take up Arthur's cause. This would not have been easy in any case. Philip was sure to seek a pretext for war, but John made peace impossible. His weak point lay in Aquitaine, where his mother's influence alone had won over the great lords. John's headstrong temper soon lost what his mother had won. He divorced his wife Avise of Gloucester, and then carried off Isabella of Angoulême to be his wife in spite of the threats of the Church. As the Gloucester family was the most influential in the English baronage, and the affianced husband of Isabella was the Count of La Marche, John's greatest vassal in Aquitaine, John's act was a masterstroke of folly. At one blow he made deadly enemies at home and abroad. Philip readily took up the com-

Quarrel  
with the  
King of  
France.

plaint. He summoned John as his vassal. John refused to come. Thereupon Philip declared war, and joined with Arthur of Brittany in invading Normandy. La Marche and Arthur hurried to besiege the castle of Mirebeau, where John's mother, Eleanor, held out. Roused for once to vigour, John surprised the rebels and captured Arthur. He could not resist the temptation of murdering him, which was as unwise as it was cruel, for Arthur a prisoner would have been a most valuable hostage, whereas his murder only gave John's enemies a fresh weapon. Still, had John shown any energy, he might have saved Normandy, for Richard had built on the Seine a magnificent castle—Château Gaillard<sup>1</sup>—strong enough to delay and defy an invader till help might be gathered in England. For a year Château Gaillard held out, but John let it fall by starvation with scarce any effort to relieve it. And with it fell the English power in France. Normandy, Touraine, Maine, Anjou, and the north of Aquitaine all came into Philip's hands. Bordeaux and the south of Guienne still remained in English hands; but nothing else save the Channel Islands was left of the magnificent heritage which Henry II had handed down.

Murder of  
Arthur of  
Brittany.

Fall of  
Château  
Gaillard,  
1204.

This was a disaster for John Lackland, but not perhaps for his English subjects. Hitherto England had been overburdened by the importance of the French dominions, as a tree by too many boughs. Boughs may be lopped, and the tree grow the stouter for the lopping. The loss of Normandy proved England's gain, in that it brought a unity which was new. Hitherto kings and barons alike had been half French, half English, with estates and interests on both sides of the Channel. Henceforward they were to be English only. And a king who neglected his duty at home could no longer take refuge in his French dominions till the storm had blown over.

Growth of  
English  
national  
unity.

The result of confining John's enterprises to England was the speedy concentration of the hatred of all classes upon him. In 1205 Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, died. He had been appointed by Henry II in days when Henry had learnt wisdom from the tumult over Becket,

Quarrel  
with the  
Church,  
1205.

<sup>1</sup>i.e. "Saucy Castle".

and wished to have no more enthusiastic churchmen. Hubert was an official rather than a churchman; he had discharged the duties of justiciar and chancellor with some credit; he had not meddled in great matters. The right of electing a successor belonged to the monks of Canterbury, but under Henry I's agreement the election should take place in the king's court. However, at the time, the monks were having a dispute with the bishops of the province of Canterbury, who claimed a right to take part in the election, and, thinking to get quit of interference by both bishops and king, they met secretly, and chose Reginald their Sub-Prior, sending him off to Rome with a party of monks to get his election confirmed by the Pope. Reginald was too vain to hold his tongue; the secret reached the king's ears, who, in high wrath, compelled the monks to make a second election of John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich, and sent off another embassy to Rome. The Pope, Innocent III, one of the most capable and masterful men who ever held the office, received both embassies and disapproved of both candidates. The Sub-Prior was a nobody; John de Grey was a friend of the king's, a better soldier than he was a bishop. One had been elected secretly, the other by dint of threats. Innocent saw the chance of exalting the Papacy at the expense of crown and country. He annulled both elections, and persuaded the monks who were in the embassy to choose his own candidate. His action was high-handed; he certainly forced his candidate on the monks every

whit as much as John had forced de Grey; but about the wisdom of his choice there could be only one opinion, for he chose a distinguished English cardinal, Stephen Langton.

Then began a violent struggle. John refused to allow Langton to set foot in England. Innocent replied with an interdict which suspended all services and closed the churches; marriages could not be celebrated; even the dead went unblessed to their graves in unconsecrated ground. Had the clergy chosen to disregard the interdict, it, like other spiritual thunders, would have passed away in mere noise, but the bishops stood by the Pope, and the clergy followed. John turned on the clergy, driving some oversea and confiscating their revenues, and outlawing



all. Innocent retorted with an excommunication which touched the godless John but little. Indeed he was doing well; he was growing rich on Church funds, and with them taking soldiers into his pay in order to settle old scores with the Welsh and Scots. At last Innocent threatened to depose him, and even went so far as to invite the King of France to drive him off the throne.

*Interdict and  
excommunication.*

This once more revealed the weakness of John's position. Had he been supreme over the clergy, interdict and excommunication would have troubled him no more than they troubled Henry VIII. Had he felt secure of his people at home, he could have defied the Papal mercenary, Philip of France, as easily as Elizabeth defied another Papal mercenary, Philip of Spain. But he was not secure; on the contrary, he had many enemies; he knew it well enough, for he had made them for himself by his grasping taxation and his vicious life. Innocent's threat cowed him, and he gave way. Submission was not made easy for him. He had to swear fealty to

*Submission  
of John.*

the Pope, to pay a yearly tribute of 10,000 marks, and to accept England as a fief held from the Pope. Degrading as these terms were, John was base enough to agree to them. That there were other kingdoms, such as Sicily and Aragon, whose kings were held in similar vassalage to the Pope without suffering much inconvenience, is no excuse for John. His baseness lies in his utter want of patriotism; to save himself he sold his kingdom into captivity; he opened still wider the door which let in Papal taxation and interference.

Meantime, having made his peace with the Pope, he might have expected to be free from Philip. Indeed the Pope ordered Philip to desist from his enterprise. But it was easier to stir hatred than to allay it. John wished to follow up a successful raid on the French fleet at Damme by an invasion of France, but his barons would not follow him. Foiled here, he prepared a great league against Philip. He enlisted the Emperor Otto and the Count of Flanders. He himself went to stir up Poitou, leaving an English force under the Earl of Salisbury to aid the allies. The plan was well laid. John's raid was to draw Philip into the west, and leave Paris open on the

*Alliance  
against  
France;  
battle of  
Bouvines.*

north-east to a blow from the German allies; but, as in all such complex schemes, accurate co-operation was necessary to success. John was for once in a way too punctual—so prompt that Philip was able to dispose of him and return to the eastern part of his kingdom while the emperor dawdled over the marriage festivities of his daughter. At length the armies stumbled on each other at Bouvines (1214), and a hard-fought action, in which the French levies on foot did their part bravely side by side with the horsemen, ended in the complete overthrow of the allies. Salisbury and the Count of Flanders remained prisoners in Philip's hands, and John was driven to retire to England, his last hopes of recovering a Continental power, and so getting relief from his English troubles, at an end.

For indeed troubles had gathered fast. The party of the barons had closed its ranks; it had been joined by the townsmen; it had found a policy and a leader. The policy was to compel the king to acknowledge formally the rights of his subjects and to amend their grievances. The leader was Stephen Langton, and the steps in which he guided his party are memorable. In 1213 there met at St. Albans an assembly, including not only barons, but also the reeves and four villeins from each royal manor, in which the grievances of the realm were discussed. A few weeks later Langton read to the barons at St. Paul's the Charter of Liberties granted by Henry I, and it was agreed that a similar charter should be imposed on John. When John returned to England after the battle of Bouvines, he did his best to strengthen himself against the barons. He imported mercenaries, implored the help of the Pope, and even took the Crusader's vow in order that anyone attacking him might come under the ban of the Church. But the barons were too strong for him; even his own friends deserted him; and at Runnymeade, on June 15, 1215, he reluctantly signed the Great Charter.

Magna Carta,  
1215.

Of this lengthy document, consisting in all of sixty-three clauses, four have turned out to be of lasting importance in the story of our Constitution. These are the twelfth, which provides that no scutage or aid, saving only the three regular feudal aids,<sup>1</sup> shall be imposed, save

The Constitu-  
tional clauses.

<sup>1</sup> To knight the king's son, to marry his daughter, or to ransom his person.

by the "common council of the realm"; and the fourteenth, which lays down that this "council" is to consist of an assembly to which archbishops, bishops, earls, and greater barons were to be summoned each by a separate writ, and other tenants-in-chief by a writ directed to the sheriff of the county. These clauses, which, to begin with, only restricted the king from imposing one kind of tax upon one class of persons—namely, tenants-in-chief—have been used as the foundation of the great principle that the king cannot levy any tax without the consent of Parliament. Further, the thirty-ninth and fortieth clauses, which run: "No free man shall be taken, or imprisoned, or dispossessed, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed; nor will we go upon him, nor will we send upon him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land", and "To none will we sell, to none will we deny or delay, right or justice", have been enlarged and widened to provide for the liberty of the subject, the right of trial by jury, equality of all before the law, and the supremacy of the law over kings, lords, and commons alike. Over and over again, through the course of the centuries, these clauses have been invoked against the Crown. When, more than four hundred years later, the Five Knights were imprisoned by King Charles for refusing to contribute to a forced loan, and again, when John Hampden would not pay ship-money, it was to the Great Charter that they appealed.

Yet though these clauses, which later ages interpreted as laying down wide principles restraining the powers of all kings, have emerged in the course of time as being the most valuable provisions in the Charter, and the rest have sunk into obscurity as the circumstances which called for them passed away, it must not be forgotten that what we now are apt to leave on one side was in its day the most important. In the main the Great Charter was a bond between a feudal king and feudal barons; it runs on feudal lines. The four great clauses are, we have seen, Feudal clauses. mainly feudal. Fourteen clauses lay down feudal obligations about wardships, marriages, escheats, and services; nine restrain the Crown from exacting money by the abuse of privileges, such as the right of purveyance, or by the increasing of established duties; fourteen are concerned with the better regula-



tion of the king's courts; add to these the thirteen clauses which applied only to the need of binding John for the time, and we have three-quarters of the whole. But the remainder includes stipulations that the Church should be free and have all its rights, that London and other towns should enjoy their privileges, that merchants should come and go freely into the kingdom, and the villein should not be deprived by fines of the implements by which he made his living. Though Magna Carta, being drawn up mainly by the barons, naturally bears most on what concerned them, it must not be described as entirely a class measure, for it was carefully laid down that rights which the feudal tenants-in-chief won from the king were also to hold good for the intermediate tenant against his superior.

Thus in the main there was little in the Charter intended to be new, since it aimed at restoring customs which John had broken. In reality it became one of the great starting-points of our national liberties.

The Charter was sealed; the next thing was to get it observed. John gave his promise, because at the time there was nothing else for him to do; he gave it the more readily, because from the first he had not the slightest intention of keeping it. When he learnt of the twenty-five barons who were to enforce it on him, he cried out furiously, "They have given me twenty-five over-kings". He cast about for means to break loose. He got the Pope to say he was not bound by his oath—one of those pieces of papal interference which England always resented. He gathered a party of barons, hired more mercenaries, and made ready for war. His enemies turned for help to France. They even offered the crown to Louis, son of Philip Augustus. Louis landed with a French force. For nearly a year civil war raged up and down England, till John fell suddenly ill and died at Newark. His opportune death was the only good gift he ever bestowed on his country. Even his abilities were always turned to evil ends. No man was a greater master in the art of misusing his talents.

The struggle  
over the  
Charter.

Death of  
John, 1216.

## XIV. The Charter and its Guardian, Parliament

### 1. Henry III, 1216-1272

The period from 1215 to 1297 is sometimes spoken of as the eighty years' struggle over the Charter. In the former year John signed it; in the latter year Edward I solemnly confirmed and enlarged it in the *Confirmation of the Charters*. But in the same eighty years grew up a guardian of the Charter who watched over it far more jealously than the committee of "twenty-five over-kings" against whom John had railed. This was Parliament, and more particularly the representatives of the "king's faithful Commons", who have built up their power, starting from the foundation laid in the Charter, that the king could not obtain money save by the common council of the realm. Before granting a supply, Parliament would demand the redress of some grievance, or the fulfilment of some promise, and first it always turned to the due observance of the Great Charter. No less than thirty-seven times have our kings been called on solemnly to confirm it.

1215-1297.  
Magna Carta.  
Confirmation  
of the Charters.

In following the reign of Henry III we must look for signs of the growth of Parliament. And we must recognize what it is that we seek. It is not merely the existence of an assembly which governed or took a share in the Government; such an assembly already existed in the "Council" mentioned in the twelfth article of Magna Carta, and of course it was far older. All English kings, even back into remote Saxon days, had a council whose advice they asked, if they did not always take it. The Saxon Witan in theory gave its consent to the king's laws and taxes, approved the appointment of his ministers, even on occasion could elect or depose a king. When the Normans succeeded, the substance of the Witan's powers came to the king's Court or Council—the Curia Regis—that body of many shapes and many functions, whose nature has been already explained. But both the Witan,

Parliament a  
representative  
governing body.

where the qualification was nominally wisdom, and the Curia Regis, whose members held land direct from the king, differed essentially from Parliament. They were to a certain extent governing assemblies, and so is Parliament. But Parliament is more; it is a *representative* governing assembly. Both Witan and Curia Regis were class bodies; Parliament is a national body.

What is to be sought, then, is the alloy of representatives with the governing assembly. This will fuse the Curia Regis into a Parliament. To anticipate for a moment the course of the story, we may remark that the year 1295 saw gathered the "Model" Parliament, more completely representative of England even than the Parliament of to-day.<sup>1</sup> We remember also that the "Eighty years' struggle over the Charter" ended in 1297: to be precise, it covered eighty-two years. If we go back from the Model Parliament of 1295, we alight on the assembly at St. Albans in 1213, which is the first example of representatives called to consult with the Curia Regis. True, that they only advised: they were admitted by courtesy, not by right. None the less it was one of those first steps which count much. It is not a little curious that precisely the same period of eighty-two years separates both these pairs of events.

Put generally, the chief thing in the history of England during the thirteenth century is the safeguarding and enlarging of the Great Charter under the hands of an assembly which itself developed into a new shape, under a new name, that of Parliament. More particularly this may be illustrated from the words of the Charter itself. The 12th clause says, "*Nullum scutagium vel auxilium ponatur in regno nostro nisi per commune consilium regni nostri. . .*"<sup>2</sup> "No scutage or aid shall be placed on the realm, save by the common consent of the realm." The progress was in two ways. First, to extend the words "*Nullum scutagium vel auxilium*" into the much wider general principle "no tax of any sort"; secondly, to arrive at a methodical and satisfactory way of obtaining this "*commune consilium regni*", namely, in Parliament. It should not be supposed that these wide ideas occurred to the minds of the barons who were fighting for their Charter

<sup>1</sup> Because the lower clergy sent representatives.

<sup>2</sup> Except the three regular feudal aids. See page 106.



against King John. On the contrary, no sooner was John dead than the party who took the side of his son Henry III under the leadership of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, and Hubert de Burgh, reissued the Charter, but carefully left out what is nowadays held to be the gist of it, namely, these 12th and 14th clauses, the very two on which the future power of Parliament against the Crown was to be founded. It is clear that in 1216 they were not felt to be necessary; perhaps not even popular. They would hamper a regency as much as a king.

Rule of National party. Reissue of Charter (without clauses 12 and 14).

John's death left the kingdom torn with civil war. The barons had invited Louis and his Frenchmen into the realm to help them against their tyrant; now that the tyrant was dead, they wished to be rid of the French. Louis, however, would not withdraw. He claimed the Crown for himself. The barons, however, soon deserted him, and drew together in the cause of the young Henry. The French were defeated by Pembroke in a desperate fight in the streets of Lincoln; while in the battle of Dover Hubert de Burgh destroyed a French fleet bringing reinforcements under Eustace the Monk. These two blows made Louis give up hope. In a few weeks peace was signed, and the French left the country.

Defeat of the French at Lincoln.

The fair of Lincoln.

Henry III succeeded to the throne at the age of nine, and was therefore at first too young to influence the Government. The first period of his reign lasts till 1232, and reflects the ideas of his ministers; in the second, the king's own weak, untrustworthy character and his foolish and extravagant policy give an opening to a set of worthless favourites, relations, and hangers-on at court; the third, beginning about 1253, is a period of turmoil caused by the efforts of the barons to obtain better government, chiefly under the leadership of Simon de Montfort. Of these, the first two may be dismissed somewhat shortly. The third calls for more notice.

1. The Earl of Pembroke died in 1219, and the business of being regent in fact, though not in name, passed to Hubert de Burgh. Hubert governed well: his chief task was to crush the few remaining adherents of John's party. Falkes de Bréauté

may fairly stand as a type of them, a refugee from Normandy whom John had used to captain his mercenaries, and had rewarded with estates, castles, and sheriffdoms. His chief stronghold was Bedford Castle, where his brother had the impudence to seize and imprison one of the king's justices. Hubert attacked the castle, forced the first two lines of walls, and undermined the keep, so that part of the wall fell. Eighty of the defenders were hanged, and Falkes himself driven into exile. Such sharp justice terrified smaller offenders into submission.

Unfortunately, when Henry came of age, in 1227, he showed no gratitude to de Burgh. The death of the great Archbishop Stephen Langton, in 1228, robbed the Justiciar of a good friend; and in 1232 Henry dismissed him, and forfeited his estates. Hubert was the last great Justiciar.

2. There followed a long period of bad government. The king was poor, since Richard had sold, and John had given away, many royal estates, and it was no longer easy to raise money by scutages and aids; but though poor he was far from sparing. His chief minister, Peter des Roches, a Poitevin, pushed his relations and foreign friends into every office and sheriffdom that fell vacant; when Peter fell into disgrace there came a fresh incursion of foreigners with Henry's wife, Eleanor of Provence. One uncle became an archbishop, a second a bishop, a third an earl. They naturally gave all they could to their own countrymen. Provençals proved every whit as greedy as Poitevins, and the whole country grew exasperated at Henry and the foreigners who filled the court. Then to make matters worse Henry engaged in an inglorious war with France, and lost a couple of battles at Taillebourg and Saintes. Saintes, narrowly escaping capture. Undeterred by this failure he meddled in the quarrel between the Papacy and the descendants of Frederick II. He weakly accepted the offer of the throne of Naples and Sicily for his younger son, Edmund, and as a result had cast on him the task of paying for the war which the Pope was waging. Edmund never got the throne, and a more purposeless waste of money could hardly be imagined.

Irritated by the foreigners, provoked by the incompetent and extravagant king, the barons demanded that proper officials should be chosen and the charters kept. Henry gave plenty of promises, but never kept them. So, till a leader could be found on the baronial side, nothing could be done. With the appearance of Simon de Montfort, however, we pass to the third and important period of the reign.

3. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, was the son of the de Montfort who had led the Crusade against the Albigenses in the south of France. He had married Henry's sister, Eleanor, but was disliked at Court, and had spent most of his life abroad.

**Simon de Montfort: reform and rebellion.**

His chief work had been as Seneschal of Gascony to try to keep the Gascon nobles in order. He set about this resolutely, and so unpopular did his firmness make him, that the Gascons complained. Henry would not support him, and Simon resigned. In 1257 he came to England. Nine years were destined to see him rise to a position above the king, then even more suddenly fall in complete ruin; and yet leave a name that ranks among the greatest in English constitutional history.

Being himself a foreigner, and related by marriage to Henry III. it seems at first sight strange that he should come to lead the national baronial party against the Court and the foreigners. But the fact is, that, though he was brother-in-law to the king, the king and his family looked down on him; and it was hatred to the queen's Provençal relations that drove him into the national ranks. His own nature, serious, masterful, and pious, soon secured him the foremost place.

In 1258 Henry, more pressed for money than ever, had to meet his barons. The assembly, known as the Mad Parliament, since all the barons came to it fully armed, drove out the foreigners, and appointed a council of twenty-four to carry out reforms. Adjourning to Oxford, it drew up a new scheme of government known as the "Mise of Oxford". The main point was the establishment of a permanent council of fifteen to supervise the government, check illegal exactions, restore justice, and recover the royal castles: they were, in case of need, to confer with another council of twelve, chosen by the

**The Mad Parliament, 1258.**



barons. The leaders in the fifteen were Simon de Montfort, and Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester.

These leaders, however, did not agree; for a time the quarrel was smothered by the death of Gloucester, but in the meantime the faithless Henry had once more given the slip to his promises. Following the precedent of his father he persuaded the Pope to absolve him of his oath, and got the question of whether he was bound by the Provisions of Oxford referred to Louis IX. Louis was probably the most virtuous king who ever sat on a throne, but he was certain to look on things from a king's point of view. He decided that Henry might do as he liked, provided he violated "no royal charter or praiseworthy custom". Henry had shown in the past that he cared not a jot for either.

Nothing was left but to try force. Simon gathered the barons to his standard, and was backed by the south. Henry's chief supporters came from the marches and the north. The division indeed was not unlike that in another King Henry's case: here Simon de Montfort plays the part which the Yorkist leader afterwards played, and the king's friends the part of the Lancastrians. The armies met at Lewes, Simon driving in an attack upon the town. The Londoners in his army were scattered by Henry's most capable leader, his son Edward. But Edward, then only twenty-four, had not yet become the cool, wary commander who was in future years to overthrow Scotland. Angered by the fact that these citizens of London had insulted his mother, he pursued his enemies furiously, without thinking of the rest of the battle. While he was away, Simon in the centre overthrew the Royal forces and captured the king. Henry had to submit, to accept once more the Provisions of Oxford, and to hand over Edward as a hostage.

So far there had been nothing to mark off Simon from the rest of the large class of nobles who from time to time have taken arms against their sovereign. He had employed the ordinary baronial remedy for misgovernment, namely rebellion. It was the familiar nostrum—the only one known to the radical politician of the time. Though Simon bore a higher character, had a better cause, and had met with greater success than was

usual, these are only differences of degree, and not of kind. In essence he was a rebel, and the case is not altered by the fact that he was an abnormally virtuous one. His next step, however, was to lift him far above any other well-meaning rebellious baron, and mark in him that combination of theory with practice, that union of wisdom and opportunity, that belongs only to the statesman.

The truth was that his supporters among the barons were in reality but few. For a time the young Earl of Gloucester had stood by him, but he was growing lukewarm. Many other barons were inclined to favour the king again now that he had accepted the Provisions. Simon's real strength lay in the middle classes, especially in the towns. The Church, too, favoured him. Hence he sought a device whereby he could make this popular support tell, and so was the Founder of what became the House of Commons.

Both in Saxon and Norman institutions the common custom of using *representatives* has been already remarked. Representatives of hundreds and boroughs sat in the Shire courts; representatives from the townships gave evidence before the Domesday commissioners; and, older than these, the Councils of the Church had been attended by representatives from each diocese. In summoning representatives to his House of Commons, Simon was following a precedent already familiar to the nation and to the Church. Moreover, as has been seen, knights of the shire had attended Langton's Council at St. Albans in 1213; and in 1254, 1261, and 1264, knights had been chosen by each county to consider in the Great Council what aid they were willing to pay. But Simon went further. To his Parliament of 1265 he summoned not only two knights from each shire, but two citizens and two burgesses to represent certain cities and boroughs.

The importance of this step is not diminished by the fact that it was plainly a partisan measure. Simon was popular in the towns; accordingly he invited representatives from the towns, well knowing that they would support him. It is true that while he enlarged the popular part of his Parliament, he restricted

Simon de Montfort's new policy.

Representatives.

The Parliament of 1265.

the upper part. Of the fifty greater barons, only his friends, some twenty-three in all, were summoned. Nor indeed did the Parliament do anything of note. Its greatness rests not on what it did, but on what it was. It gave a starting-point from

Origin of the  
House of  
Commons.

which has grown our House of Commons. So long as those who attended the Council, or Parliament—call it by what name we may—were all either barons or knights of the shire, there was only one class represented—the class of landholders. The citizens and burgesses, however, represented the traders. And although in Simon's day, and for long after, landholders and traders sat together, yet the knights of the shire speedily grew accustomed to act with the men from the towns, thus forming a party of the "Commons" as distinct from the greater barons, the "Lords". This union of smaller landowners with the citizens and burgesses, the junction in one party of representatives from towns and counties, is a distinguishing mark of our Parliament. France, Spain, and the Empire also, at one time or another, had Estates or Diets to which representatives of different classes came, but each acted by itself, for itself; each "Estate" dealt with its own affairs only. And whereas these institutions all decayed, our Parliament grew stronger and stronger. Its most vigorous part is the House of Commons, and much of its vitality is due to the fact that it has always been a national body and not divided into "Estates". The beginning of this was Simon de Montfort's work.

Fall of Simon.  
Battles of  
Kenilworth and  
Evesham.

Yet after all it was the work of a rebel, and no time was spared him to foster it. The quarrels between him and the young Gloucester grew keener. Prince Edward contrived to escape, and set himself to overthrow Simon. He made friends with Gloucester, and promised that he would expel the foreigners and rule according to law; and Edward, unlike his father, was known to keep his promises. Thus deprived of allies, Simon had only his sons and vassals to support him. While he was struggling to raise men in Wales, Edward, with a much larger force, got between him and his castle of Kenilworth, where his second son was gathering troops. Simon tried to slip back to join his son, but Edward surprised and cut to pieces the younger



de Montfort's army at Kenilworth, and then, turning on Earl Simon, hemmed him in at Evesham; on three sides lay the river Avon; the only bridge was guarded; on the north, Edward's men swarmed in to the attack. Simon saw that he was lost. "God have mercy on our souls," cried he, "for our bodies are the prince's." He died fighting bravely against overwhelming odds.

Since Simon's cause rested on himself alone we might suppose that with his death his work too would perish: that the idea of a Parliament, extended so as to embrace town as well as county, would be looked on as the dangerous device of a rebel, and accordingly be left alone for the future. It is true that his party was destroyed; in the course of the next two years his sons were overcome, and the royal cause became again supreme. But it was Edward who had won and not Henry; Simon had at least secured this, that there was no return to the thriftless, faithless, purposeless rule of Henry III's earlier years. Simon de Montfort died a rebel with arms in his hand. Yet none the less he was a patriot and a remarkable statesman—remarkable not merely in the character of his work, but in the high-minded nature that enabled him to identify himself with a great cause. Like Stephen Langton he raised a baronial party from partisanship to patriotism. Just as Stephen Langton, originally forced on John by the power of the Pope, turned at the call of duty against the Papacy when the Papacy lent its support to the worthless King John, so Simon, himself a foreigner and a kinsman of the king, took arms against the king and his foreign favourites for the sake of good government. He is one example out of the many which history offers of an alien to whom England owes much. This half-Frenchman who founded our House of Commons may be well classed with the Dutchman who afterwards saved the liberties of Parliament, and with the Jew who showed Great Britain the meaning of Imperialism.

## 2. Edward I and the Law

For years before his accession to the throne Edward had given proof of vigour and unusual ability. As a young man he had been employed in ruling the most turbulent parts of his father's realm, Gascony and the Marches of Wales. The skill with which he had crushed Simon de Montfort has been already noted. Yet, though masterful by nature, he showed no wish to become a despot. On the contrary, he aimed at governing strictly by law, and making others obey what he respected himself. Thus he came to complete what Simon de Montfort had begun, namely, the establishment of the power of Parliament.

Edward's  
respect for  
law.

This is not a little curious. It might be supposed that the man who had been Simon's most capable foe, who had beaten his armies and brought about his death, would have been the last person to carry on as king the work Simon had begun as a rebel. We might think that in Edward's eyes the representing of the Commons would be hateful—a factious plan intended to harass the king. It was not so. Edward's legal turn of mind naturally brought him to develop Parliament till it should be truly representative of all classes.

Almost at once he repeated Simon's plan. To his Parliament of 1275 he summoned burghers and citizens from the towns, as well as knights of the shire; but this practice did not at once become the rule. Later again the knights alone were summoned, and sometimes no representatives at all of the "Commons" were sent for, Parliament then returning to its original shape the "Great Council" of magnates. At times again the king got grants direct from representatives of the merchants, without calling the others. Still, the principle that the assent of all was needed both to statutes and to grants of money was gradually becoming more settled.

Parliamentary  
experiments,  
1272-95.

But in the middle of these Parliamentary experiments Edward suddenly found himself involved in serious difficulties abroad. A later chapter gives the story of his dealings with the Scots and

the Welsh. All that need be said here is that in the year 1295 Scotland was rebelling; France, irritated by a fierce fight between English and Norman shipmen, in which the Normans were worsted, had joined alliance with the Scots and was invading Gascony; three revolts had broken out in Wales. Edward needed money to deal with three separate wars at once; that alone would have compelled him to summon a Parliament. But he seems to have felt that in a time of such danger to the nation he must take the nation into his confidence in a peculiarly thorough fashion. So he gathered his famous Parliament of 1295, summoning to it the earls and greater barons, the archbishops, bishops, and mitred abbots, two knights from each shire, two citizens and burgesses from each city and borough. As this Parliament was summoned by a king it has deserved its name of the "Model Parliament", for it has served as a model for all subsequent Parliaments. Indeed, in one sense, no other Parliament has ever so completely represented all classes, for Edward also caused the priors of the cathedrals, the archdeacons, and representatives of the clergy of each cathedral and each diocese to be summoned also. Thus the "three estates" of the realm, clergy, nobility, and commons, all figured in it fully represented. It was only because the churchmen preferred to remain a class apart, and to make their own grants of money in their own assembly ("convocation"), that their representatives have since had no place in the Lower House.

Model Parliament,  
1295.

The clergy.

The "Model Parliament" did not disappoint Edward's hopes. Clergy, barons, and commons alike voted him money. Yet just as with Simon's assembly, the Model Parliament of 1295 was important rather for what it was than for what it did. By its existence it established a precedent. "Parliament" could no longer be a class body, representative merely of the great barons and bishops, or of the landowners; henceforth it was national. Only thirty years had passed, and the device of a rebel baron had been accepted as the deliberate policy of a king.

Edward's troubles did not end, however, with the holding of the Model Parliament. Money had been voted, but it took time to collect it, and Edward, at war with Scots, Welsh, and



Frenchmen, was in a desperate hurry for supplies. To make things worse, Pope Boniface VIII, who wished to force Edward and Philip IV, King of France, to make peace, determined to cut

off the supplies of money which they drew from  
**Clericis Laicos.**

the clergy in their realms. He therefore issued a bull known as "Clericis Laicos", forbidding all payments "from the clergy to the laity" without his sanction. As a matter of fact both kings treated the bull as a vexatious piece of papal interference. Edward I let it be understood that if the clergy refused to pay the grant they had promised, he would treat them as outlaws; that is to say, the law of England would give them no rights against anyone who defrauded or wronged them. Still, the result was to leave Edward in even greater straits for money, and, what was worse, his barons refused to go to the war in France. They were bound, they admitted, to accompany him; but they understood their obligation to "accompany" in the narrowest sense:

**Refusal of Bigod  
and Bohun to  
serve abroad.**

declared they would not go to Gascony while he went to Flanders. The Constable Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, and the Marshal Bohun, Earl of Hereford, were the ringleaders. "By God, Sir Earl," said Edward to the Constable in a ferocious pun, "thou shalt go or hang." "By God, Sir King," was the cool reply, "I will neither go nor hang." The two earls went home and fifteen hundred knights with them, and Edward, now at his wits' end for money and men, seized the wool from the merchants in the ports, ordered the courtiers to find him provisions, and soon after sailed for Flanders.

No sooner was he out of the kingdom than the two earls appeared in London, and forbade the King's Council to collect any of the moneys irregularly levied on wool. A Parliament was hastily summoned, and the earls demanded that the Great Charter

**Confirmatio  
Cartarum,  
1297.**

should be solemnly confirmed, with the addition of a clause that the king was not to take "such manner of aids or prises save by the common assent of the realm"; that the "evil tax" (the maltôte) on wool was to be given up; and that for the future the king and his heirs would not take anything without the common consent and goodwill of the *commonalty of the realm*, save only the ancient "custom"

on wool, skin, and leather already granted. The Council of Regency gave their promise to this, and the king afterwards confirmed their promise.

Thus the years 1295 and 1297 saw the fulfilment of what had been first shadowed out eighty-two years before; the year 1213 saw the first appearance of representatives of the Commons at a great Council; 1295 saw the principle established as a model. Magna Carta was signed in 1215: its most important principles were reasserted and agreed to in the most solemn way in the Confirmation of the Charters of 1297. Eighty years had the struggle over the Charter lasted: it had ended in the victory of the nation over the king, and in the creation of a body whose chief duty was to watch over the Charter, namely Parliament. Yet it is noteworthy that the victory was won, as it was in 1215, by a rebellious gathering of barons. Parliament had not yet the vigour to stand for itself. In extremity the old remedy against misgovernment, an armed rising, was once more used. But while the first monarch, John, only gave promises as a convenient way out of a temporary difficulty, Edward's word could be trusted. His motto was "Keep troth", and he took pride in maintaining it. Then again the Confirmation of the Charters went much further than Magna Carta. That had only forbidden the levy of illegal scutages or aids, and in word at any rate Edward had not broken it. Taxing wool was not taking either scutage or aid. Edward was within the letter of the law. But the barons went by the spirit of it. They read the Charter as laying down the restriction of all taxation (save the three regular feudal aids) unless by the consent of the realm, and Edward, by yielding, admitted that they were right in their view.

Step forward  
from Magna  
Carta.

The end of the thirteenth century, then, saw the making of Parliament, the germ of a *representative governing* assembly. Yet it is going too far to think of Plantagenet parliaments as exactly like the busy, inquisitive, masterful body of to-day. In the first place, Lords and Commons still sat together; the severance between the two houses did not come till Edward II's day. Secondly, Parliament had no regular time for being summoned; that depended on the king. Thirdly, it had only a very indirect control over the king and his ministers;

Limitations of  
Parliament.

the only way it could make its power felt was by withholding supplies.<sup>1</sup> It could not make laws; what it did was to petition the king, and if he gave assent to its petitions with the words, *Le Roi le veut*, they became statutes; if, however, the king replied, *Le Roi s'avisera*,<sup>2</sup> the petition might be altered or dropped. It could not make ministers, though by degrees it found a cumbrous way of getting rid of exceptionally bad ministers by *impeaching*<sup>3</sup> them. It was not much consulted about affairs of state. Speaking generally, it had little force of its own. If the king smiled on it, it grew strong and even pugnacious; if the royal favour was turned away, it dwindled. Thus Parliament had little character of its own; it merely reflected the character of its patron for the time being. Members of the Commons did not covet membership, or come back year after year, as they do now, with the experience of many sessions. On the contrary, the task of being a member was rather looked on as a disagreeable and expensive duty, to be discharged once, and if possible eluded for the future. An assembly made up in the main of new and inexperienced men would naturally be timid. In a word, Parliament under the Plantagenets, and for

<sup>1</sup> Even so, much of the royal revenue was still beyond its control. Royal revenue at this time, and for long years after, may be broadly divided into two kinds, ordinary and exceptional. The ordinary supply came mainly from the royal demesne—the estates, that is to say, that the king owned, like a feudal lord. The profits of these, coupled with the fines imposed for breaches of the law; the payments made by towns on the royal demesne, and the money paid by merchants trading into and out of the kingdom, sufficed for the normal expenditure of the king. Extra or unusual expenses, such as were demanded by war, were met by "taxation", properly so called. This was not at first annual, but exceptional. It did not always fall on the same class; it might take the shape of a grant of a tenth or a fifteenth on the lands of the barons, or it might fall on the lands of the Church, or it might be a tollage on towns or a prisage imposed on the wine or wool of the merchants. By taking now one and now another, a rough equality was maintained. Still, so long as the king mainly "lived of his own" (on his own income), the control exercised by Parliament was bound to be incomplete. It was only as the king's private wealth dwindled and the importance of taxation increased that Parliament got a more complete hold over him.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. "The king will see about it".

<sup>3</sup> Properly so-called an *Impeachment* is a trial in which the House of Commons is the accuser and the Lords are the judges. It differs from an *Act of Attainder* (the other parliamentary way of getting rid of an unpopular or guilty minister), for an Act of Attainder is not a trial at all, but (as its name denotes) a *Bill* of Parliament declaring that such and such a person is guilty of whatever it may be and is to be put to death. This becomes an *Act* by passing the two Houses in the usual way, and on receiving the Royal Assent becomes part of the law of the land—though only applying to the person or persons named in it. The word Attainder means that the "blood" (the family) was "attainted", and therefore the man's goods and property were forfeited to the king.



many years after, was rather a weapon which could be wielded than a power which would act by itself. None the less, the root of the matter was in it. It did represent the nation; it did possess the power of the purse; and from this by degrees grew the rest.

An account of Edward I and Parliament is incomplete without some notice of his great legislative measures. In a sense he was the maker of English law as he was the maker of the English Parliament, since his is the earliest reign to which our law looks back. Statutes and decisions of his

Edward and  
English Law.

time are still "good law", unless they have since been set aside. And his reign was marked by great legislative and judicial activity. Apart from a mass of rules, dividing the work more definitely among the various justices in the various courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, the business of keeping the peace throughout the country was entrusted to a new body of officers known as Conservators of the Peace. In the reign of

Edward III these officers, with enlarged powers, had their name changed to the familiar term of Justices of the Peace, and have since then continued to discharge all kinds of local justice. Two points about these "J.P.'s" are worth special notice. They have never been paid, and they have no special legal training. This follows on the same idea which appears in the jury<sup>1</sup> system and in Parliament, and in all our county and district councils, namely, that an English citizen has to do his duty to the state without any reward save that of honour; it has helped to keep the law closely in touch with everyday life; and it has saved us from the growth of a huge class of officials who, besides being very costly, are always inclined to magnify their own importance at the expense of the good of the public. The history of the paid jurymen at Athens, and paid deputies and local functionaries in France and Germany seems to show that, by paying, the state is sometimes worse served, since pay may attract a lower class of men, who may be tempted to take bribes, or use their place to do favours. Certainly, to serve for pay is a lower motive

The Courts  
and Justices  
of the Peace.

<sup>1</sup>The ordinary jurymen is indeed paid, but the sum is so small that it cannot be described as a recompense for his loss of time.

than to serve for duty; yet it must be remembered that men of small means cannot afford to serve the state for nothing, and good service merits a reward.

Three great statutes of Edward I's deserve special mention—namely, the statute of *Mortmain*; the Second Westminster (*De Donis Conditionalibus*); and the Third Westminster (*Quia Emptores*). All three are concerned with land. To understand them we have to think once more of feudalism.

A feudal owner's power and wealth, whether he were king, tenant-in-chief, or mesne-tenant (see p. 60), depended largely on his sub-tenants. While they lived they paid certain services and dues; when they died their heirs paid fines, such as heriots and reliefs (see p. 83), before they succeeded to the estates of the dead. The overlord, then, was interested that during their lives they should be men of substance, able to discharge their duties punctually, and that their deaths should occur with normal frequency. At first sight one might be disposed to think that the last matter might be left to nature, that all tenants would die: but this is not so. There was a class of tenants who never died. If land were granted to a corporation, or to a corporation sole—that is to say, for example, to any monastery, or to “the abbot”, or “the vicar”, or “the mayor” of such and such a place—these never died: men came and went, but the institution or office lasted. Thus land granted to churchmen never changed tenant; it passed into the “dead hand”, into *Mortmain*, and the superior lost for ever all dues coming from its change of owner. “The Abbot of Glastonbury”, for example, never died, never was a minor, and never could be assigned in marriage. Land granted to him paid neither heriot, relief, wardship nor marriage dues. Further, as churchmen and monks were anxious to swell the estates of their order, and as a grant of land was the general way of securing those masses for the soul which were intended to help it in its passage through purgatory, deathbed grants of land to religious houses were common. Beyond this, however, there was a fraudulent practice of handing over land to a religious house and getting it regranted on easy terms. Edward I's statute of *Mortmain* forbade the buying, selling, or acquiring of land in any fashion

so that it could pass into *mortmain*; if any such bargain were made, the grant was void, and the land passed to the immediate superior.

The nobles were with the king in this matter, since they were always jealous of the churchmen, who had been the chief holders of land in *mortmain*. They also mostly approved the statute *Quia Emptores*. This was designed to check what was called *sub-infeudation*, that is to say, the practice of a feudal-tenant granting away to a sub-tenant part of the land granted to him. The reason why it was tempting to sub-infeud was that thereby the granter got more men under him and thus more power. An ambitious man would make a number of grants—often very petty ones—to his less pushing neighbours, in order that he might have a call on them in case of need; they would accept, since they would expect his protection in return. For two reasons the great landowners and the king (who was the greatest landowner of all) disliked this. To begin with, it involved all feudal ties in a tangle. It often happened that a man would hold land from three or four different people. He might be a tenant-in-chief from the king for one piece, and sub-infeuded to, say, the Earl of Gloucester for another piece, and to Sir Roger, who was himself a tenant of the Abbot of Tewkesbury, for a third. King, Earl, Knight, and Abbot would all have claims on him. Secondly, the tenant, in his anxiety to extend his feudal power over a large array of vassals, might grant away so much of his holding that he would be unable to perform his own due services to his overlord. Hence the statute *Quia Emptores* provided that, if a tenant granted land in this way, the receiver of it would hold, not from the granter, but from the granter's overlord.<sup>1</sup> This statute, like *Mortmain*, favoured the tenants-in-chief, but still more the king, as feudal superior of all land. By increasing the number of tenants-in-chief and diminishing the average size of their holdings, it decreased their social dignity and helped to destroy feudal power.

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the diagram on p. 126 (which represents things in a very simple way without taking account of the many complications caused by a man holding land from two or three different overlords, and being perhaps a "tenant-in-chief" for one holding and a "mesne tenant" for another, may make this rather tangled matter clearer. Suppose A grants land to *a*, who, being an ambitious fellow, sub-infeuds some to 1 and 2. This is



One more measure, also of lasting importance in our history, was that known as *De Donis Conditionalibus*, which enabled land to be left to a man and his heirs in such a way that he was forbidden to part with it. This set up what is called "entail". As many estates were thus entailed, much land was secured in the possession of great houses. But it was secured to the heir, the eldest son; save where means of evading the statute were found, the younger sons of the house could get none. Thus, though a small number of landowners were kept great, there was no establishment of a landowning caste, who would regard themselves as noble, being inheritors of land, and despise all landless men as socially inferior; the younger sons of great families had to seek fortune in the world, either in arms, in the Church, or in the law. Thus, as these professions were constantly recruited from the younger sons of landed families, no severance grew up between the landed "noble" and the rest. It was not so in France, where all "nobles" remained "nobles", and the immense gap between them and the people was one of the great causes of the Revolution of 1789.

within *a*'s power before the passing of *Quia Emptores*. After the passing of the statute he desires to make a grant to *g*; but if he does so, *g* will not be *a*'s tenant, but will hold

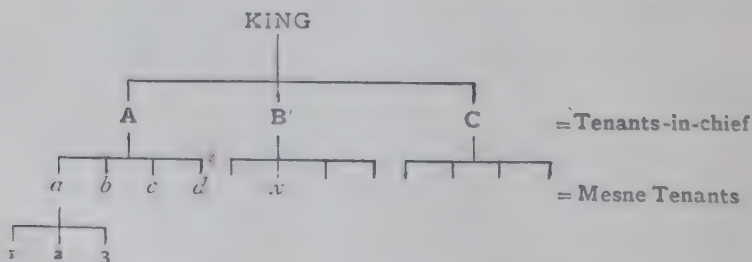


Diagram to illustrate the Statute *Quia Emptores*

from *a*'s overlord A. Similarly, if B makes a friendly grant to *a* let us say, his son-in-law, *x* will now be a tenant-in-chief, holding direct from the king, and will become X.

## XV. An Early Great Britain and its Failure

### 1. Wales

Edward I was a man of great political ideas; moreover, he had qualities and advantages which many political thinkers have not got. He was no mere dreamer, but a practical statesman. He not only thought, but he planned. He strove to put his ideas into practice in a logical and orderly way; and being a king, and a very powerful king too, he had the chance of trying his schemes. He could do what he liked; he was not, as statesmen often are nowadays, compelled to be content with half-measures, aiming only at the second best, because the best seems too difficult to attain.

We may sum Edward's policy as one of "orderly consolidation". Two aspects of it—his far-reaching legislative measures, and his shaping of the Model Parliament—have been explained. Another, which was of immense value to the kingdom, though it scarcely finds a place in political history, is seen in his commercial policy. At first each town had aimed at getting privileges for its own townsmen: those who were "free of the town" had all sorts of rights of buying and selling which the stranger from outside did not possess. In the regulations of the town guilds and merchant guilds, which were associations of townsmen in each town, we find hosts of regulations limiting and preventing the "foreigner" from competing or interfering with the townsman's profits; and it must not be supposed that "foreigner" included only those who were not English. The word was of far wider meaning. It meant anyone who was not a townsman. Consequently there was an abundant crop of jealousy between townsmen of different towns, and the whole trade of the country was hampered.

Policy of consolidation in law making, Parliament, and commerce.

Restrictions in towns.

Although the average townsman was unable to see beyond his own town walls, Edward I was not likely to take so limited

a view. He did much to prevent the towns shutting themselves up in a cage of restrictions. He encouraged them where he thought the guild rules to be sensible, as, for instance, in insisting upon good quality of wares, and in trying to prevent people from creating artificial scarcity by buying up quantities of goods with the hope of being able to sell again at higher prices. But he looked at the good of the whole country—at the nation and not at the town. And he did something to check the exclusive spirit which he saw around him. He could not believe that it was wholesome that a Londoner should be regarded as a “foreigner” in Southampton, or a Newcastle man as a “foreigner” in York; and though he did not break down the town privileges altogether, he took them under his royal regulation. Thus, by being the first English king who followed a *national* commercial policy, he set an example which his successors followed.

Royal regulation of  
Guilds.

National legislation, national treatment of commerce, a national Parliament in which all classes were represented, all bear witness to Edward's idea of a “united English nation”. But Edward was not content with this. He aimed at something much wider—a united British race. He strove to join under the English crown both Wales and Scotland. In his first object he succeeded: in the latter, he failed. The story of these enterprises is the next main subject.

An early  
Great Britain.

The Conqueror had hedged in the Welsh by setting on their borders the most warlike of his barons, trusting thereby to employ their turbulent energy to his own gain. His son Rufus blundered into South Wales with an invading army, only to find his slow-moving mail-clad array helpless against the nimble Welshmen. He speedily saw his mistake, and returned to his father's policy, making in it, however, an improvement. He left the task of coping with the Welsh to the barons on the marches—the “lords marcher”—but he stimulated them by granting to them all the land that they could conquer. Piece by piece the lords marcher drove the Welsh back. Each forward step was secured by castles, whose remains still crown so many hilltops in South Wales. The Welsh were pinned in among the hills in the rugged north. All that

Conquest of  
the Welsh  
marches.



remained to them was "the Principality", the Snowdon country (Merioneth and Carnarvon, and the Island of Anglesea).

Had things gone on thus, an effective but no doubt very brutal conquest might have been completed. But in the reign of Henry III came a sudden revival in the Welsh power, such as often occurs in a downtrodden race. The barons, too, were fighting among themselves, and the Welsh prince, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, took Simon de Montfort's side, and induced Edward to buy him off in 1269 by surrendering much of the country that had been conquered. Llewelyn, not content with the success of his first effort at fishing in troubled waters, tried again. In 1277 he planned a marriage between himself and Eleanor, the dead Simon's daughter. This being clearly a prelude to rebellion, Edward led an army into Wales. Llewelyn retired with his forces into the Snowdon range, feeling sure that the mountains would fight his battles should Edward follow him. Edward was much too wise to try. Instead of wasting his men among steep rocks he blocked all the passes, brought up a fleet to guard the coast, and starved Llewelyn out. Yet, when the Welshman surrendered, Edward did not treat him harshly; he made him pay homage, but left him some of his power, and let him marry Eleanor.

Llewelyn,  
Prince of  
Wales.

But in the attempt to settle the conquered country, by dividing it into shires after the English fashion, and bringing in English laws to replace the Welsh ones, Edward stirred up much bad feeling. Three years later David, Llewelyn's brother, rebelled. Llewelyn at once joined him. Their plans failed completely. Llewelyn was killed in a single combat by one of Edward's followers; David was captured and put to death as a traitor. The whole of the north thus came into Edward's hands, and he showed that he meant to keep it by bestowing on his son the title of the Prince of Wales, a title which has since become familiar in our history. The strong castles of Harlech and Conway still bear witness to his firm grasp of the Principality.

Death of  
Llewelyn.

In his dealings with the Welsh, Edward showed no desire to be harsh. He was determined to be master of the country, and to make his power a reality; but it was not till Llewelyn and

David proved themselves traitors to their words that Edward became relentless in destroying all elements of Welsh rule. It was not till statesmanship and treaty proved useless that he used the blunter method of conquest. In his dealings with Scotland we shall see Edward pursue the same plan. When his schemes failed he resorted to force. But while little Wales could be crushed, Scotland proved more stubborn.

Before studying the circumstances which tempted Edward to meddle in Scotland, we must see what the kingdom of Scotland was, and how it had been formed.

## 2. Scotland

### § 1. *The Makings of Scotland*

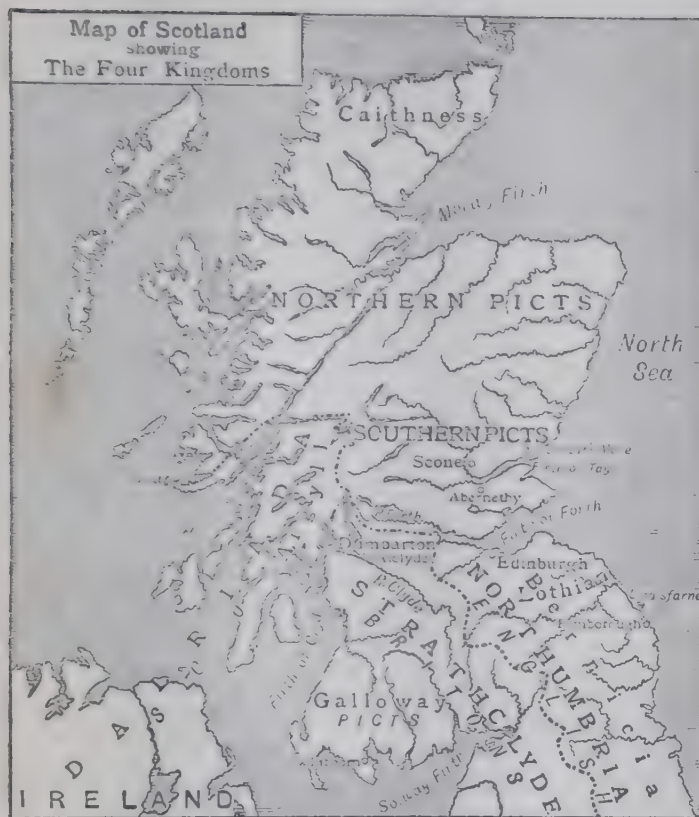
In this chapter we have to notice: (1) how the various kingdoms in Scotland had come under one rule; (2) how the English language had spread in the country; and (3) in what way the kings of England had regarded it as a kingdom in some sense subject to themselves.

The beginnings of Scotland are in a way like the beginnings of England, though they are even less familiar than the story of the rivalry between the kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. Four separate districts have gone to make up Scotland as it is now: the land of the Picts, which included all Scotland north of the Forth and Clyde, except Argyllshire; the kingdom of the Scots (originally an Irish people), in Argyllshire; the kingdom called Strathclyde, which stretched originally from the Clyde to the Ribble, inhabited by Britons—of this, however, only the northern part came into Scotch hands; and, last, the district called Lothian, inhabited by Angles. This included the east coast of Britain from the Forth to the Tees; but here, as in the case of Strathclyde, the southern part has fallen to England and not to Scotland.

Picts, Scots,  
Strathclyde,  
and Lothian.

The uniting  
of kingdoms.

We remark a resemblance to English history, and yet a difference. Each kingdom was made out of a junction of smaller



kingdoms; but while in England the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes were all of the same Teutonic stock, speaking the same language, in Scotland there was a fusion of two different stocks, the Celtic and the Teutonic, and a contest of language. This contest was unknown in England, from which the British Celt was almost driven out; even in districts where he survived he proved for many years to be a very unimportant factor.

Difference  
of race and  
tongue.

Union began with Kenneth MacAlpin, King of the Scots, who made himself ruler over the Picts also. This joined the two Celtic peoples; and though Kenneth's power was certainly very slight in the far north, and only reached in the south to the Forth and Clyde, we have here the beginnings of Scotland, or Alban as it was then called. The next step on the part of the kings of Scotland was to spread

Kenneth  
MacAlpin,  
843.



their authority over the kingdom of Strathclyde. These Strathclyde Britons were, however, also attacked by the English in the south. Hence English and Scots came into conflict, each claiming to be rulers over Strathclyde. At last Edmund of Wessex found it wiser to make friends with the Scots than to wage war against them, as well as against the Danes, so he made an alliance with Malcolm I and gave up to him Strathclyde. It was not very clear that it had ever been his to give, for the English authority had never been firmly established there; but in any case the northern part of Strathclyde was joined to the Scottish dominions, and by 1018 the King of Scotland was also king there.

The last region to be added to the others was Lothian. Lothian was at first part of the Saxon kingdom of Northumbria.

Then it was overrun by Danes. When Alfred's grand-  
**Lothian.** sons again subdued the Danish powers in the north, it was doubtful to whom it should belong, for the King of Scotland had by this time seized Edinburgh, and was laying claim to the country round it. Dunstan, who was minister to King Edgar, saw that it would be very hard for his master to hold a province so far north, and by his advice Edgar "granted" Lothian to Kenneth II. This was much like the gift of Strathclyde. Lothian had once been under English power; it was English in speech, and the city of Edinburgh got its name from a long-dead Northumbrian king.<sup>1</sup> But it had passed from Saxon hands, and Edgar's grant was practically a surrender of what would be a great trouble to keep. Some fifty years later Lothian was again ceded to Malcolm II by an Earl of Northumbria, after a great battle won by Malcolm at Carham in 1018, so that henceforth Lothian clearly formed part of Scotland. It is worth note that this was the same year which saw the death of the last king of Strathclyde.

Lothian was the last possession to be gained; it was also much the most valuable. It was more fertile, it was more civilized, and it was Saxon in law and speech. We must  
 now notice how this Saxon speech spread over all  
 Scotland save the Highlands, and how, after Scotland  
 had subdued Lothian, Lothian in its turn subdued Scotland.

Spread of  
 English  
 speech.

<sup>1</sup> Edwin's Burgh.

We may trace the working of this struggle in the one reign of early Scottish history that is fairly familiar, that of Macbeth. In its history indeed Shakespeare's play is quite misleading. The Macbeth of his story is a relentless, cruel monster, who meets with a speedy death as a fit retribution for his crimes. Now Macbeth, who was chief of Moray, did murder King Duncan and take the kingdom for himself. But his reign, so far from being short and disastrous, lasted seventeen years, and was by no means without glory. He gained the support of his people, beat off a Northumbrian invasion, was generous to the Church, and perhaps even made a pilgrimage to Rome. But he was a usurper: when he was at last overcome by Malcolm, the son of Duncan, all who wished to make their peace with the king of the old time set themselves to blacken the usurper's character. His memory was no more popular under King Malcolm III than was that of another and better known usurper in the days of King Charles II.

Malcolm III (Canmore) had spent fourteen years in England, and he knew English speech as well as he did his own. He reigned in Scotland from 1057 to 1093, and saw England fall before the onset of the Normans. As the Norman power spread northwards, he felt his own throne to be in danger. He took up the Saxon cause, and to cement the alliance married Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling, Saxon heir to the crown. Margaret was a very remarkable woman. The chroniclers admire her for being learned and pious, but she was also a keen politician. She had great influence over her husband, who followed her advice in many ways. As was natural, she wished to see things done as she had seen them in England. Thus she persuaded the Scottish Church to fall in with the customs of the Roman Church, just as the English Church had done at the Synod of Whitby, four hundred years before, with the same result of bringing Scotland into a closer connection with what was the best educated and the most civilized part of Europe. In everything she did, she spread English customs and English speech, first over Lothian, and then, as Lothian was the most important part of her husband's dominions, over the rest. She thus became

Macbeth.

Malcolm III  
(Canmore)  
1057-93,

and his wife,  
Margaret.

the head of the English party against the Celts, and it is noteworthy that not one of her sons bore a name used by any Scottish king before. Edward, Edmund, Edgar, Alexander, David, all show her wish to break with the Celtic past.

Naturally this was resented by the Celts, and after Malcolm's death the Celtic party set up Donald Bane (Malcolm's brother), as king, drove out the English-speaking officials, and tried to return to old ways. For a time it seemed likely that Scotland might be divided into two—a Celtic-speaking kingdom north of the Forth, and an English-speaking kingdom south of it; but at last Edgar, son of Malcolm Canmore, overcame Donald Bane and his Celtic party. The army with which it was done, however, was largely aided by Normans, who came from Rufus's dominions in search of adventures and estates. When the war was over, these remained in the Lowlands, and thus, in addition to its Saxon blood, the south of Scotland has a mixture of Norman blood and Norman names; many of Bruce's supporters in later days—men of whom Scotland is most proud—were of Norman descent, as their names show: Lindsay, Ramsay, Wishart, Maxwell, are all Norman names—indeed, Bruce himself bore a Norman name. Yet though with the help of these Normans the English-speaking party got the mastery for the time, after Edgar's death division still went on. Alexander the Fierce ruled Scotland north of the Forth, supported by the Celts. His younger brother, David, was king over Lothian and Strathclyde, backed up by Norman barons and the English king. On Alexander's death, however, David inherited his realm, and was able enough to reconcile both parties under him.

Revival of  
Celtic party.

Kingdom re-  
united under  
David, 1124-53.

We have already dwelt on Malcolm III's marriage with Margaret since it led to the supremacy of the English-speaking part of Scotland over the Celtic. But it had other results too. Malcolm, as a relative of the old kings of England, became an enemy of William the Conqueror. Hence we have a fresh reason for wars between England and Scotland. Indeed, it was while invading England that Malcolm was slain. Henry I desired to end this hostility by the same method that caused it, namely, a marriage. He mar-

Alliance with  
Norman kings  
in England.



ried David's sister Edith, or, as she is known in English history, Matilda. Thus David was Henry I's brother-in-law; and just as Margaret had brought in the English influence, Matilda strengthened the Norman party in Scotland.

We may note how at the most critical periods in Scottish history royal marriages have played a momentous part. We have Margaret and Matilda. Our minds instinctively turn on to another, Margaret of England (sister to Henry VIII), and to the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots, and we may add one more Margaret, who did not live to be married, but whose union could not have failed to be of the deepest consequence. This is Margaret, the Maid of Norway. The seeker after coincidence will notice that all the names begin alike.

Alliance with the family of Henry did not bring peace but a sword. David, as uncle of the Empress Maud, and also as a Norman baron,<sup>1</sup> was involved in the quarrel between Maud and Stephen. He did not play a very disinterested part in it. Like many others, he could not resist the temptation of fishing for himself in troubled waters, and though he was defeated in the Battle of the Standard,<sup>2</sup> yet he managed to get Stephen to surrender to him Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Westmorland. Henry II, however, looked on this just as he looked on the rest of Stephen's actions, and he did not intend to be bound by it. He compelled David's successor to restore the four counties, and being lucky enough to capture William the Lion at Alnwick, he compelled him in the Treaty of Falaise to do homage for his whole kingdom. More than once William came to England to repeat the homage, and the superiority of the English crown would have been clear enough had not Richard I, as has been related, sold William his homage back again.

Scottish royal marriages.

Treaty of Falaise, 1174.

Thus the whole relation between the two countries was in a tangle. The English kings had tried to make out some claim to be lords over the kings of Scotland. They could point to

<sup>1</sup> By his marriage with Matilda, granddaughter of Seward, Earl of Northumbria, he held the Honour of Huntingdon, the Earldom of Northampton, and a claim on the Earldom of Northumberland.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 71.

gifts of territory and to acts of homage. On the other hand, the kings of Scotland could say that these gifts really implied nothing; that the homage was for English earldoms which they held, and not for their Scottish dominions; and that if any homage was due for Scotland itself, Richard's bargain had cancelled it. Yet so far there was no national enmity between the two. They did not glory in being different races. They fought indeed at times, now one side winning, and now the other. Yet even at the Battle of the Standard David of Scotland fought under the flag of the Dragon, the same sign as that which King Alfred had used, while a Robert Bruce, an ancestor of the Scottish patriot king, was in the English ranks. Scotland had not yet begun to think of England as a tyrant, nor did England look on Scotland as a rebel. Indeed, for the great part of the thirteenth century the two kingdoms were at peace. Both Alexander II and Alexander III married English princesses; both were wise rulers, who did much to unite Scotland and strengthen the royal power, without either attacking England or admitting the English supremacy. The more bitter feeling which becomes so marked in the next century was to spring from the doings of Edward I.

## § 2. *Edward I and the Scottish Throne*

The end of the reign of Alexander III was darkened with disasters. One by one the king's children died. Alexander, indeed, was still vigorous. He was only in his  
The Scottish  
 succession.  
 Death of  
 Alexander III,  
 1286.
 forty-fourth year; by a second marriage he might still raise up heirs for the kingdom. Unhappily these hopes were futile. The king himself was killed by falling over the cliffs while riding back at night to rejoin his queen. The only direct descendant was a granddaughter, Margaret, the child of Eric, King of Norway.

Here Edward saw his chance of drawing still closer the destinies of Scotland and England. The kingdoms were on good terms. His plan was to unite them by a marriage between Margaret, Maid of Norway, and his own son, Edward, Prince of Wales.

No one can deny that the plan was good, always provided that it was to be wisely carried out. That the union of the two kingdoms has been of benefit to both is undoubted, and it is fair to think that it would have been as useful in 1286 as it proved to be in 1707; that it might well have been led up to by a royal marriage is obvious, for that, we know, is the very way by which it was brought about. People felt this at the time, for the Scottish Estates wrote to Edward, "we on our part heartily consent to the alliance, not doubting that you will agree to reasonable conditions". Edward was very reasonable. In the Treaty of Birgham, which arranged the matter, it was laid down that Scotland was to retain her laws, rights, and liberties, and to remain a separate kingdom. Edward did not, it is plain, look for an immediate or complete union. The union of the crowns would be a good beginning; the rest would follow in course of time. Again we may notice that this was what actually did happen much later.

Unluckily all depended on the Maid of Norway, and she fell ill on the voyage from her father's country to Scotland, and had to be landed in Orkney, where she soon died. Thus Edward's scheme fell to pieces, and, what was far worse, Scotland was left without a direct heir to the throne.

Death of the  
Maid of Norway.

Edward might have acted more wisely if he had recognized that his great chance was gone, and had given up any idea of further interference in Scotland. But this was just what Edward could not do. The plan of uniting the kingdoms was still as attractive, though it was no longer as easy to carry out. Yet the temptation to intervene in a country which had no head to rule it was overwhelming, especially as he could make out some sort of claim that the Kings of England were paramount over Scotland; and he was encouraged to go on since the Scottish barons begged him to act as umpire between the rival claimants to the throne.

Edward as  
umpire.

Yet here he and the Scottish barons committed themselves to a course, the only end of which was an appeal to arms. It is all very well to act as umpire: what if the umpire's decision is not accepted? Choosing one candidate is sure to disappoint



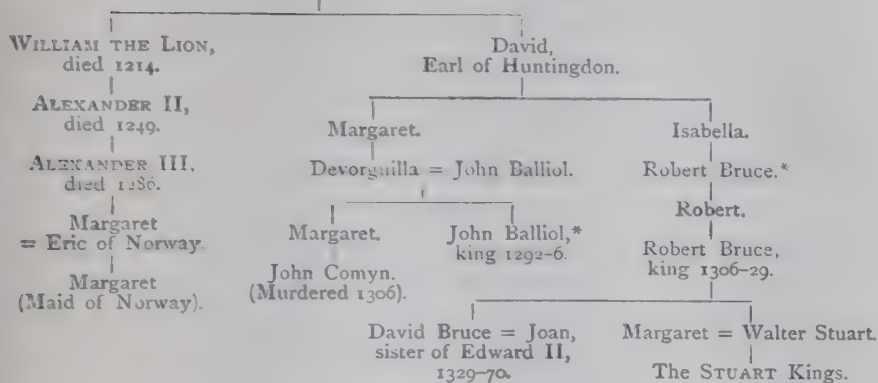
the rest. None could imagine that a powerful sovereign like Edward would allow his decision to be defied. Yet the only way to support it was by force. And this meant a struggle of the weak to avoid the dictation of the strong.

Englishmen are too ready to look solely at Edward's object, and to forget his unwise and afterwards violent methods; Scots sometimes only see the latter, and accuse the king of deliberate treachery in all he did. Edward thought of the old English claims over Scotland in the narrow spirit of a lawyer. The Scots urged that these had been sold. But questions of this kind cannot be decided in legal documents, or haggled over as if they were merchandise. Edward had determined to be lord over Britain, cost what it might. Scotland was equally determined to be free. Thus, if we argue about oaths and rights we are wasting our breath. Edward may have broken oaths, but Robert Bruce did the same. English troops harried and burnt, but Scottish troops were no whit behind them. In such times men must be judged by what they felt to be their duty to their country, as things came before them, and not by what they had sworn.

When the Scottish barons met Edward at Norham, Edward made it clear that he claimed to be acting as Lord Paramount over Scotland. The candidates and their supporters might have withdrawn then and there. They did not; on the contrary, the nine candidates present, after due deliberation, admitted Edward's claim. We cannot call them selfish poltroons ready to sell their country for the chance of a crown, for it is clear that so far the mass of the Scottish nation did not resent Edward's claim. They believed that he would make an honest choice; they hoped that he would content himself with the mere title of Lord Paramount; and in any case nothing could be worse than a disputed succession left to be settled by civil war. Edward was still acting honestly, if somewhat domineeringly. A court of eighty Scots and twenty-four Englishmen tried the question. John Balliol, Robert Bruce, and Hastings, had the best claims. Balliol was chosen and placed on the throne

The award  
of Norham.

Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, son of DAVID I



The competitors of 1292 marked \*.

The reign of John Balliol is always regarded as a disgrace alike to king and nation, but it is hard to see that Balliol could have done better. Edward took care, before he set him on the throne, to make him swear to be obedient to him; but the Scottish nation had not the slightest intention of letting him be obedient. A quarrel at once broke out. Macduff, brother to the Earl of Fife, appealed to Edward against one of Balliol's decisions. Edward bade the Scottish king come to England, as his vassal, to have the case tried there. It was clear that if he refused Edward would dethrone him; but if he obeyed, his own people would cast him out. He could either keep his oath and betray his country, or be true to his country by breaking his oath. Such was the unpleasant choice set before him.

Balliol strove to gain time. He protested; he actually came to England. But the Scots had by this time made up their minds. They drove out all Englishmen and seized their estates. They persuaded Balliol to make an alliance with France (1295). As Edward was at war with France, this was open defiance.

As soon as Edward could disentangle himself from his difficulties with France, he marched with an army into Scotland to subdue one whom he looked on as a rebel. He stormed Berwick, where the townsmen were brutally massacred by his soldiers; he defeated a Scottish army at Dunbar—the Scots

rushing down to attack what they thought to be a retreating force, and being themselves routed—and soon overran the whole country. Balliol was deposed, and Edward took Scotland for himself, setting up Warenne and Cressingham as regents. Scotland as an independent kingdom seemed to have come to an end.

Thus Edward had been led from policy to force, from being an umpire into becoming a combatant. In following him step by step it is not easy to say at what precise point he transgressed from what was fair into what was not justifiable. Each act may be described as the natural or legal consequence of what went before. Yet none the less at the end he found himself in the position which only "Might" could turn into "Right". He had undertaken to crush a nation because its chief men had broken faith with him, and this to one whose motto was "Keep troth" may have been reason enough. But the life of a nation cannot be forfeited in this way, and Edward was bound to appear as a foreigner, aiming at conquest. Thus he raised against himself a force which he was unable to subdue.

Rise of  
national  
feeling in  
Scotland.

### § 3. *The Story of Scottish Independence*

From the first no one had liked Balliol. Yet when a king of England showed that he meant to conquer Scotland and make it part of his kingdom by force, the whole of Scotland determined to resist. Hitherto Edward had had, in the main, to deal with the Scottish barons; they, as we have seen, were largely Norman in blood. Now he had to encounter something quite different, Scotland in arms against him.

The hero round whom this national spirit gathered was Sir William Wallace. Wallace had slain an English sheriff in the streets of Lanark, and had taken to the hills. He was joined by a considerable force, though few nobles supported him; either they thought his cause too hopeless to risk their estates, and so were lukewarm, or they were jealous of him as an upstart. Warenne and Cressingham moved from Berwick in search of him, and Wallace posted himself near Stirling. Stirling Bridge was a place of great military importance in



Scotland; below it the Forth could not be crossed by an army; close to the west lies a rugged hill district; consequently Stirling commands the only easy access from the south of Scotland to the north. Warenne and Cressingham completely mismanaged the battle; their advance guard was in time to seize the bridge, but retired again. The next day Cressingham insisted on an attack, though Wallace was now within easy reach of the bridge and the causeway leading northwards from it, and the English would have to cross it slowly, two by two, for it was narrow; not even when an easy ford close by was pointed out would Cressingham wait to use it.

Wallace coolly waited till a third of their force was over, then attacked, seized the causeway head, and cut to pieces the body who had crossed, while their comrades stood helpless on the other bank. Cressingham himself fell in the fight, and the whole force was scattered in headlong rout. One by one all the fortresses in English hands fell, and Wallace followed up his blow by leading his men to plunder in the northern counties. The pitiless ferocity of Edward's soldiers at Berwick found ready imitators among the Scots, who flayed the dead Cressingham and kept his skin as a token of their triumph, set fire to Dunottar Chapel, leaving the English garrison, who had taken refuge there, the choice between being burnt alive or casting themselves over the rocks into the sea, and slew unarmed men, women, and children in the northern counties. Wallace himself could not control his followers. "I cannot", said he to the priests at Hexham, "protect you from my soldiers when you are out of my presence." But for English soldiers at any rate he had no mercy. To those who shrank from the butchery at Dunottar, he cried: "I will absolve you all myself. Are you Scottish soldiers, and do you repent a trifle like this, which is not half what the invaders deserved at our hands?"

The  
Battle of  
Stirling  
Bridge,  
1297.

Wallace's  
raid.

Edward was not the man to put up with this tamely. He hurried back from Flanders, and started in person for Scotland to crush Wallace, who had now been named Protector of the Kingdom. But though it was easy to invade Scotland, it was not easy to draw the Scots into a battle. Wallace had wasted

the country, and withdrawn his men north of Edinburgh. The king could not discover where he was hiding, and had much difficulty in feeding his own army. At length two Scottish nobles, who either were genuinely in Edward's service or could not accept the low-born Wallace as a leader, revealed where the Scots lay. Edward set off instantly, and, making the utmost



speed, came on Wallace near Falkirk before he had time to retire. The main Scottish strength lay in their pike-men, whom Wallace formed into three bands or schiltrons. They had a few men-at-arms and a few archers. The battle began in the usual style, with a charge of the English knights; these drove off the Scottish men-at-arms and archers, but completely failed to break the pikemen; in fact, they were forced to retire in confusion. Here came the critical point in the battle. Had Edward continued to hurl his horse-men against the pikes, the Scots might have beaten off all attacks,

and remained victorious. Edward, however, was no foolhardy feudal warrior who despised his enemy. He held up his cavalry for a space, and bade his archers advance, directing a concentrated fire on particular spots in each schiltrons. Under the arrows the pikemen fell fast; they could make no reply; their own archers, who might have answered the storm, and their men-at-arms, who could have driven off the archers, had been beaten from the field. The steady array wavered, and when Edward, seeing his chance, poured in a third charge, Wallace's men broke and fled. It is said that 15,000 Scots fell.

For seven years Edward strove to complete his conquest. He led army after army into the country, but so long as Wallace was at large the resistance went on. At length, in 1305, Wallace was betrayed by some of his followers to Sir John Menteith, who was acting as Edward's sheriff in Dumbarton, and by him handed over to Edward. Menteith is generally called a traitor for this, and as a Scot he acted treacherously to his country. Still, he had taken Edward's side, was Edward's officer, and in capturing Wallace was so far doing his duty to the master he had chosen. Wallace was taken to England, and tried as a traitor to King Edward. He denied that he could be a traitor, since he had never sworn to obey Edward. But the king had him condemned. He was hanged, and his body, cut into four pieces, was fixed on the gates of Newcastle, Berwick, Stirling, and Perth. Edward meant to warn the Scots against further risings, but he made a great mistake. His merciless treatment of Wallace only made the Scots hate him the more.

Mr. Andrew Lang<sup>1</sup> sums up Wallace's life in these words: "We know little of the man, the strenuous, indomitable hero. He arises at his hour, like Jeanne d'Arc; like her, he wins a great victory; like her, he receives a sword from a saint; like hers, his limbs were scattered by the English; like her, he awakens a people; he falls into obscurity, he is betrayed and slain. The rest is mainly legend. He seems ruthless and strong, like some sudden avenging Judge of Israel; not gentle and winning like the Maid, but he shares her immortality.

Capture and  
Death of  
Wallace.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Scotland.*



"For the scattered members, long ago irrecoverable, of the hero no stately grave has been built, as for the relics of the great Marquis of Montrose. But the whole wide world, as Pericles said, is brave men's common sepulchre. Wallace has left his name on crag and camp—

'Like a wild flower,  
All over his dear country'."

With Wallace dead, Edward might think that Scotland was subdued. In a year, however, the Scots had found a fresh leader. Robert Bruce, the grandson of Balliol's rival, had not given up hopes of the crown. Hitherto he had played no more patriotic or consistent a part than most Scottish nobles; he had sworn fealty to Edward, broken it to join Wallace, deserted his cause in turn and made his peace again with Edward, commanded Edward's artillery at the siege of Stirling, and at that very time entered into a treasonable "band" with Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews. This did not seem of much promise, particularly as Bruce followed it up by the murder of his rival, the Red Comyn, who, after standing by Wallace far better than Bruce had done, had also come round to Edward's side, and was acting as one of his regents. Bruce stabbed him in a church at Dumfries; perhaps he believed that Comyn had betrayed his "band"; perhaps it was in sudden quarrel—the two were old rivals. In any case it was a wild act, which seemed likely to mar his cause from the first. Not only had he defied Edward: not only, as a red-handed murderer, was he a foe of the Church and an outlaw; but as his victim had a claim to the Scottish throne as nephew to John Balliol, and was moreover the most powerful baron in Scotland, Bruce had begun by distracting with a fresh feud a country already, to all seeming, hopelessly divided in the face of the enemy.

Bruce, however, acted with courage. He hurried to Scone, was crowned king, and gathered a few men. Aymer de Valence pounced on his scanty following at Methven, and scattered it. Bruce had to flee to the Highlands, where, though safe from the English, his own countrymen still sought his blood. John, Lord of Lorne, a cousin of Comyn, pursued Bruce to avenge his mur-

dered kinsman. From all these perils Bruce's own personal strength, and his faithful friends, of whom the chief was Sir James Douglas, "the good Lord James", preserved him. Still, so desperate were his fortunes that he had for a time to take refuge on the lonely island of Rathlin, near the Irish coast. His brother Nigel, taken prisoner at Kildrummie, was hanged, a fate which befell most of his supporters<sup>1</sup> who fell into Edward's hands. Hitherto Edward had been amazingly forbearing with men who had fought against him, usually accepting submission and restoring their estates. Wallace alone had suffered, and he was an outlaw. But now the king's patience was exhausted.

In 1307 the tide turned. Venturing over to Arran, and looking longingly across the sea at his own castle of Turnberry in Carrick, Bruce sent a spy; if there seemed a chance for a surprise, the spy was to light a fire. The spy found no hope, and lit no fire. But Bruce and his comrades saw one, and crossed. For some time he was hunted up and down Galloway and Ayrshire, but every now and again, as at Loch Trool and Loudon Hill, he turned on his pursuers and routed them; and each victory brought him fresh followers. At the English Court men ridiculed the outlaw as "King Hobbe", but Edward knew better. He made ready once more to march into Scotland with an army, but died at Burgh-on-Sands, in sight of the hills where Bruce had struggled so manfully.

Even had Edward lived, he could not have won in the end. He might have beaten Bruce, but he could not have conquered the Scottish nation and kept it down by force of arms.

His plans, promising as they were at the outset, had <sup>Death of Edward I, 1307.</sup> failed, and his efforts to force them to success had only made failure more hopeless. He had wished to unite England and Scotland; all he had done was to divide them more deeply than they had ever been divided before. Under the sturdy blows of the "Malleus Scotorum" had been forged the tough steel of a nation's character.

Bruce had seen enough of Edward I to realize how great was his gain in being rid of him. It was more glory, he declared, to win a foot of land from him than to wrest a kingdom from

<sup>1</sup>Two other brothers were captured and hanged a year later.

his son. Once the old "Hammer of the Scots" was gone, his son, Edward II, was revealed as a feeble foe. He trusted to favourites, who proved no more capable than he was himself. His reign was broken by discontent, thriftlessness, armed insurrections. While quarrels and jealousy paralysed England at home, she could not be vigorous in maintaining her hold on Scotland.

Step by step Bruce won his way. Aberdeen came into his hand; his brother Edward reduced Galloway to his obedience; the French king gave him secret aid; in 1310 the clergy declared him—excommunicated man as he was—the lawful king of the land. One by one the castles in Scotland were wrested from English hands. Lord James Douglas surprised Roxburgh; Randolph, Earl of Murray, captured Edinburgh by leading thirty daring men to climb the Castle Rock; but all the exploits were not left to the knights and men-at-arms. A farmer named Binnock, engaging a body of countrymen to aid him, seized Linlithgow by driving a wagon of hay under the gateway, so that the portcullis could not be let down. These and many like exploits mark the heroic age of Scottish history, when the fierce unruly courage of its people was expended against a national foe instead of being squandered in private feuds and struggles with the Crown, when even merciless exploits like the "Douglas Larder" become pardonable, since they were patriotic.

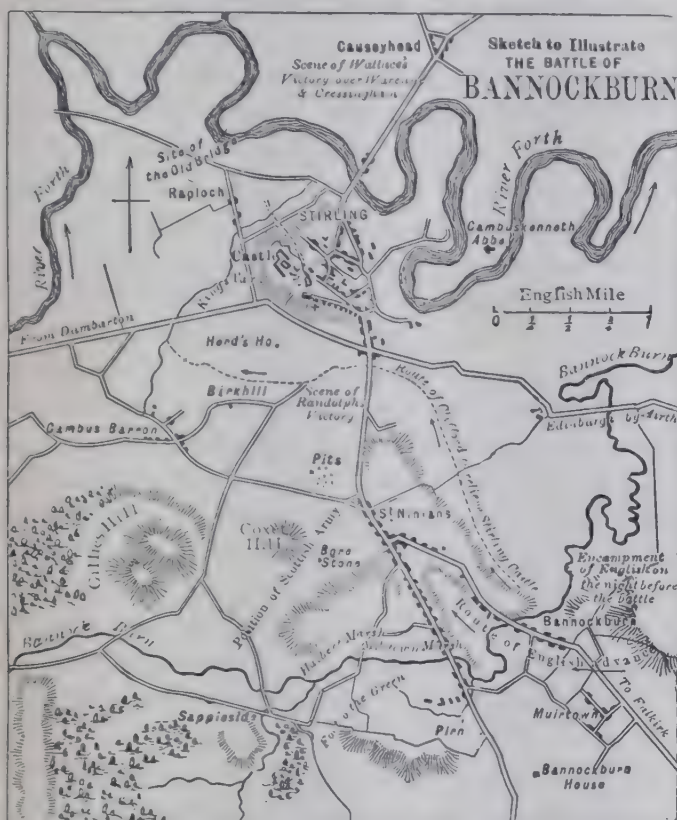
In 1314 Stirling Castle alone held out. Edward II led a huge army northward to relieve it. Bruce, with far smaller forces, determined to give battle. It was daring, for the English were two to one; but in the continuous warfare of the last seven years Bruce's men had grown into fine soldiers, confident and experienced. Bruce showed no foolhardiness. He drew up his men to block the roads leading into Stirling from the south. Across his front ran the little stream of the Bannockburn; marshy ground protected his flanks, and on the left he dug pitfalls as an additional safeguard. He adopted for his pikemen the same circular formation used by Wallace at Falkirk, but kept his horsemen in reserve. While Bruce was thus careful to make the best of ground and

Bruce establishes his position as king.

Battle of Bannockburn, 1314.



men, Edward II threw away every opportunity that his numbers gave him. He sent forward his archers unprotected, and so allowed them to be rolled up by a charge delivered by the Scottish horse from the right flank. He then committed his whole force to a charge full on the Scottish front. Some got entangled



in the pits and marshes; even those who reached the Scottish line came on without impetus up the rising ground, and could make no impression on the pikemen. The English knights fought fiercely, but with no common aim, and so far as mere valour went were matched by the Scots, who had taken the field determined to conquer or die. They were burning to set their country free; they fought to protect their homes, their wives, and their children, and to pay back the terrible wrongs they had suffered. The English attack was beginning to waver, and the Scots them-

selves were advancing, crying: "On them, on them; they fail!" when a body of Scottish camp followers were seen pouring down from the Gillies Hill. The English, already disheartened, took them for a fresh force arriving to support their comrades. They fled in terrible confusion. The king himself rode in hot haste to Dunbar, and took ship to Berwick, leaving his army to the unhappy fate of a broken force in a hostile country.

Bannockburn decided the question once for all. England could not conquer Scotland. But Edward II, too feeble to conduct a war effectively, was too obstinate to yield. Chapter of Myton, 1319. Henceforth the Scots held steadily the upper hand. Berwick was taken, and one raid after another devastated the English border. One expedition, led by Randolph, harried and burnt its way southward into Yorkshire; encountered there, at Myton-on-Swale, by the Shire levy headed by a mass of clergy, the Scots made such a slaughter among the white surplices that the fight was known as the "Chapter of Myton". In 1322 Edward made another attempt to invade Scotland, but was forced to retire and narrowly escaped capture at Byland. Since his own barons would not support him, it was vain for him to hope to subdue the Scots. A truce was concluded, to last thirteen years (1323).

Four years of it only had run when Bruce broke it. He seized the moment of Edward II's deposition to march once more across the Border. The young Edward III, Edward III and the Scots. with a large army, marched to meet the Scots. When he at last managed to come up with them they were so strongly posted that he dared not risk an attack across the River Wear. But what he did not venture the Scots did; James Douglas led a night raid into the English camp, and actually got to the royal tent before he was driven back. Then the Scots retreated by night, leaving their camp fires burning, so that the English did not perceive their going, and Edward was left with no enemy to fight.

This was the last effort. In 1328 peace was made between the two nations at Northampton. Bruce was recognized as lawful King of Scotland, and England gave up all her claims. Scotland had triumphed. Peace, 1328.

Robert Bruce's reign ended in 1329. For Scotland it was a memorable reign. Before its close he had obtained a mastery over all his foes at home and abroad. He had established the alliance between Scotland and France which was to lead to so much. He had freed Scotland from the foreign invader. He had united it as it had never been united before. All alike were ready to obey him. The barons, Norman in descent and hitherto half-Norman in feeling, had become good Scotsmen and good patriots. In the fire of national trouble there had been welded a nation, firm, self-reliant, confident, proud of its race and of its king.

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## XVI. Edward II

In taking out the battle of Bannockburn from the reign of Edward II, in order to put it in its proper place with Scottish affairs, we rob the reign of the one event which is really notable. Otherwise it is extraordinarily barren of anything that is interesting or fruitful. It is not devoid of incidents; on the contrary, it is full of violence, but it is violence of the most sordid and selfish kind. Nothing comes of the violence; there is no progress; no strong character finds an opportunity of rising into greatness. In the midst of the turmoil all that floats to the top is the scum.

Kings, like ordinary men, sometimes stand revealed by their favourite tastes. William I was a great hunter, "loving the red deer as their father"; Richard I enjoyed the struggle of a tournament; Henry VIII was a mighty wrestler and great at casting the bar; each of these tastes somewhat betrays the man; Elizabeth's wardrobe illustrates her vanity, just as the love of "sauntering" tells us more than a little of Charles II, the leaden saints round the brim of the hat display Louis XI of France, and the homely leg of mutton and apple dumplings describe George III. Like these other monarchs, who surpass him in wits, or in honesty, or in both qualities, Edward II had, too, his favourite and characteristic amusement.

Character of  
Edward II -



It was to play at "cross and pile": that is to say, tossing a coin and crying heads or tails.

He was indeed a weak and worthless man, placed in a situation which made the worst of his weakness. He did not carry on the work that his father had begun in the consolidation of England; still less could he complete the task which had proved too much for his father, namely, the conquest of Scotland. He was unlucky, too, in the men about him. Even Henry III, who was no more apt as a ruler, had a great churchman and minister in Stephen Langton, and an illustrious rebel, Simon de Montfort. Edward II's friends and foes were alike men of no value.

Incapable of ruling himself or his realm, Edward trusted the task to favourites. The friend of his boyhood, Piers Gaveston, had been much disliked by Edward I, and banished from the Court. The young king at once recalled him, made him Earl of Cornwall, married him to his niece, and put him over the heads of all the nobility. Naturally vain and empty, the elation of success turned Gaveston's brain. He combined insolence and incapacity in all he did. His one talent appears to have lain in the bestowing of rude nicknames, which were appropriate enough to stick and pointed enough to sting. The nobles, assembled in Parliament, agreed immediately that he must be banished; but though they drove him out they could not keep him out. A solemn assembly of the Great Council in 1310 appointed "Lords Ordainers", who were intended to take the government out of the king's hands, and these officers did indeed produce a scheme of reform known as the Ordinances, which included the appointment of responsible Court officials, the summoning of Parliament, and, of course, the perpetual banishment of Gaveston. Edward II brought him back again for the third time in 1312, but this proved to be his end. He was besieged and captured at Scarborough, taken south into the midst of his enemies, the Earls of Lancaster and Warwick, and beheaded by them on Blacklow Hill. The "Hog" and "The Black Dog of Arden"<sup>1</sup> taught him that as he had made them afraid of his wit, he might well be afraid of their memory.

<sup>1</sup>Gaveston's nicknames for the two Earls.

Scottish troubles filled the next few years, and the disaster of Bannockburn was turned to advantage by an ambitious noble. This was Thomas of Lancaster, son of Edmund Crouchback, the younger brother of Edward I. Thomas of Lancaster. Thomas held from his father the earldoms of Lancaster, Leicester, Derby, and expected to succeed, through his wife, to the earldoms of Lincoln and Salisbury. His chief exploits up till now had been the destruction of Gaveston and his refusal to go north with Edward to Bannockburn, a piece of fortunate prudence which enabled him to push off all share for that disaster on his cousin, the king. For a year or two he practically ruled the kingdom, till Edward grew restive under his control. As Lancaster's chief allies were great men on the Welsh border, Hereford and the Mortimers, Edward sought to set up a party for himself in the west, and promoted a pair of new favourites, the Despensers, father and son, to wealth and possessions. This proved a prelude to more disturbance. The Despensers were banished in 1321, but the king, showing some energy for once, collected an army, crushed the western nobles, and drove Lancaster in flight northward. The king's friends turned him at Boroughbridge, where he strove to cross the Ure, scattered his men, and took him prisoner. His fate could not be doubtful. He was beheaded at Pontefract and a number of his adherents hanged or imprisoned; among the prisoners was Roger Mortimer.

Time was the only thing needed for a fresh outbreak against the king to gather. His promises, indeed, were well enough. In 1322 he and the Despensers repealed the Ordinances, The Despensers. and declared that affairs of interest to the realm were to be treated in Parliament, "as hath heretofore been accustomed". But, as "heretofore accustomed", the feebleness of the king and the greediness of the Despensers soon supplied cause for a new plot. This time it was hatched in France, where it was safe. Roger Mortimer joined Queen Isabella, who had gone to France to pay homage. She brought over her son, and the conspirators removed to Hainault, the queen refusing to return to England, and openly discarding her marriage vows. In 1326 the plot was ripe. As soon as the conspirators

landed, all that were discontented—and that was the greater part of England—joined them. The king meant to flee to Ireland, but dawdled aimlessly on the Welsh marches till he <sup>Overthrow of the king.</sup> was captured with his friends, the Despensers. They were hanged; the king was deposed and imprisoned. Soon afterwards he was murdered in Berkeley Castle.

Thus the internal history of the reign is the familiar one of feudal rebellion; we have seen it over and over again—in Stephen's reign, in Henry II's, in John's, in Henry III's. It succeeded in the first and failed in the second, because one king was weak and the other vigorous; in the third and fourth instances it has a certain gloss cast over it by the presence of great men such as Stephen Langton and Simon de Montfort, and by the beginnings of English liberties in the Great Charter and the House of Commons. Edward II's catastrophe has nothing to redeem it; it is a sordid tale of selfish violence and family ambition. Yet, while the details are confusing, and the outcome seems to lead nowhither, there are one or two points which will become of importance later, and may therefore be noticed.

First, then, we observe the "Favourite". He is a man raised up by favour of the king from a more or less insignificant position, as a counterpoise to the power of the old noble <sup>The "Favourite".</sup> families. This is true of Gaveston, and to a certain extent true of the Despensers. But it must also be noted that the "favourite" was also the king's chief agent in carrying on the government. Thus he was not only the recipient of favour, but the bestower of it also. To use a word of much more modern meaning, he was a sort of "minister": yet he differed from a true minister in that he held his place solely by the king's favour. Some men can be placed unhesitatingly in one class, and some in the other. Buckingham, for example, was a "favourite"; Walpole was a "minister". The distinction is clear. Buckingham held his place by the king's favour, and Parliament could not, despite its efforts, turn him out, whereas Walpole depended for his place upon his majority in Parliament. Between these two men we may find others whose position is less clear; what precisely are we to call Strafford, Danby, or Marlborough? It is plain that they are not either completely independent of Parlia-



ment, nor completely dependent on it. But the point of interest in Edward II's day is that the old hereditary nobility, who naturally hated favourites as upstarts, and regarded the right of filling the king's great offices as belonging to themselves, strove to control these appointments. In 1309, and again in 1322, the name of Parliament was invoked, and an attempt made to limit the king's freedom of choice, but to no real purpose. The fact was that Parliament was still but a name, and had no effective power; it had ideas, but could not enforce them.

Just as Gaveston is interesting as a type, so is Thomas of Lancaster. Mention has been already made of his possessions and expectations: Earl of Lancaster, Leicester, The House of Lancaster. Derby, with the inheritance of Lincoln and Salisbury. In days when titles meant lands and lands meant power, this was a menacing collection. Compare this Earl of Lancaster with another, by name Henry, also (Duke) of Lancaster, Earl of Leicester, Derby, and Duke of Hereford. The similarity is startling, and becomes still more startling when it is added that he, too, was a king's first cousin. This Henry of Lancaster, whom we shall meet later<sup>1</sup>, is, of course, John of Gaunt's son, Bolingbroke, who overthrew his royal cousin, Richard II, and became King Henry IV. Had Thomas won the battle of Boroughbridge instead of losing it, it is likely that he also would have ousted his royal cousin, Edward II, and become King Thomas I. The interest of his position lies in his being a forerunner in that long struggle in which the younger royal branch of *Lancaster* was to prevail over the older line. He tried the first fall and was thrown; his kinsman was destined to prove a better wrestler. The position of the buckets<sup>2</sup> would change anon.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *King Richard to Bolingbroke.*

"Give me the crown.—Here, cousin, seize the crown;  
On this side my hand and on that side yours.  
Now is this golden crown like a deep well  
That owns two buckets, filling one another;  
The emptier ever dancing in the air,  
The other down, unseen and full of water:  
That bucket down, and full of tears am I  
Drinking my griefs, while you mount up on high."

—Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act IV, Sc. 1.

Further, as Thomas of Lancaster's ambitions foreshadow the systematic treason of the house of Lancaster and the Wars of the

**The axe.** Roses, so, too, the methods of Edward II's day foreshadow the methods of the time that knew Margaret of Anjou, Clifford, and Richard III. The headsman's axe and the halter became for the first time familiar political engines in English controversy. Gaveston, Lancaster, the Despensers, Mortimer, and many of their friends and followers came to violent ends; and the merciless policy of silencing political opponents by putting them to death was to become so ordinary as to seem, to men of the time, natural.

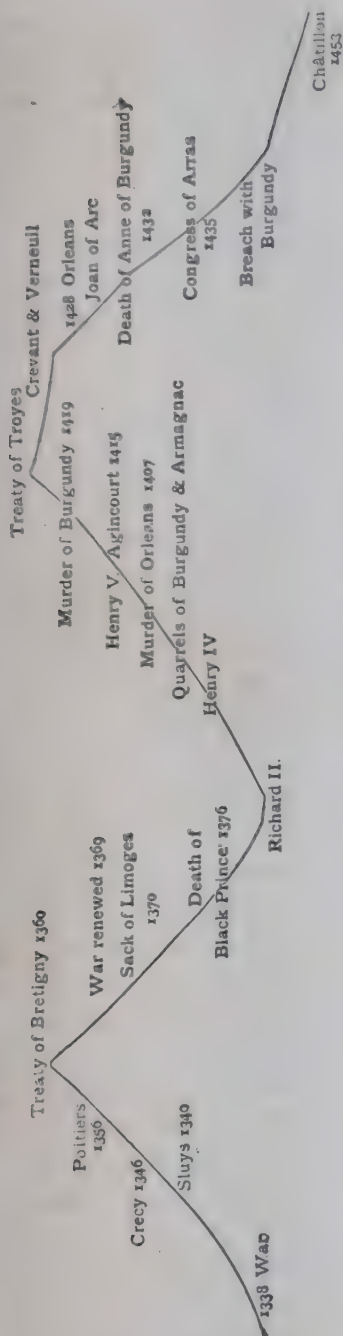
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## XVII. The Hundred Years' War with France

### 1. Edward III and Richard II

1327-1399

Edward III's reign began in 1327. He was, however, only fifteen years of age, and the real power lay in the hands of the queen, Roger Mortimer, and the Council of barons. **Overthrow of Mortimer.** These had been united in the hostility to Edward II, but there agreement ended. The Council was soon shaken by quarrels between Mortimer and Henry of Lancaster (younger brother of Thomas). Each schemed against the other. Mortimer surprised a plot headed by Edward II's half-brothers, the Earls of Norfolk and Kent, and punished the Earl of Kent with death. This piece of violence, added to the facts that the Government had been singularly unsuccessful in its dealings with Scotland, and that all were scandalized by the conduct of Mortimer with Queen Isabella, turned everyone against him. Edward acted quickly and decisively. He caused Mortimer to be seized and hanged, and, by imprisoning his mother, Isabella, he freed himself from leading strings.



The Two Waves of the Hundred Years' War

In Edward III's reign the main thread of the time is not far to seek. It is found at once in the war with France. Plainly, however, the "Hundred Years' War"—for so it is named—will lead far beyond the reign of Edward III. War did not indeed go on all the time from 1338 till 1453. There were <sup>The Hundred Years' War.</sup> truces now and again, and often long ones. But, speaking generally, for a hundred years England and France were enemies. In following this extended period of history, which covers the reign of five English kings, it is convenient to fix in the mind some landmarks.

The war may be divided into two periods of great success and two periods of failure; two huge waves of victory, each slipping away in its turn into a deep trough of defeat. The first wave covers the early part of Edward III's reign. We have the Battles of Crécy and Poitiers, and the Treaty of Bretigny, in which the French king admits the English claim to the south-west of France. This is followed by a time of decline in the latter part of Edward III's reign, and of complete failure in Richard II's, when a French force lands in Sussex. The second wave begins to rise with Henry IV, and reaches its crest with Henry V. He outdoes the glory of Crécy and Poitiers by his victory at Agincourt; he



marries the King of France's daughter, and is called his heir; his infant son Henry VI is crowned King of France in Paris. The summit of Henry V's glory is marked by a treaty, the Treaty of Troyes, just as the Treaty of Bretigny had been the highest point of Edward III's achievements.

But then came the second period of failure. First, Joan of Arc, and then the breach with Burgundy shook English power. By degrees all was lost that had been won, till, in 1453, nothing was left to England but Calais.

### § 1. *The English Archer*

The striking fact in the war is that over this long period the English win the great battles, and that in spite of being much weaker in numbers. Chroniclers' numbers are not very trustworthy, but neither at Crécy, nor Poitiers, nor Agincourt were the French less than three to one; probably their advantage was still greater, yet in every case they were hopelessly beaten, and indeed, until the appearance of Joan of Arc, no pitched battle went against the English, with the one exception of Beaugé. This superiority in the field was due to the English archer.

Everyone knows his characteristics. He carried the longbow, a large and stiff weapon. He drew the cord to his ear instead of to the breast, as the shortbowman did. The shaft, The long-bowman. thus driven, flew with amazing force; and so long as the archer was supplied with arrows, he could keep up a very rapid and accurate fire.<sup>1</sup>

Curiously enough, with all these merits, it was some time before the longbow was valued as it deserved; it is, further, probable that it was not even English in origin. Such captains as Richard I and Simon de Montfort placed more faith in their "arbalestiers" or crossbowmen, and most of the archers who did such execution at Falkirk were Welshmen. Giraldus Cambrensis,

<sup>1</sup> The archer usually carried twenty-four arrows in his quiver. On going into action he emptied his quiver, and thrust the arrows, point downwards, into the ground before him. The longbow was effective to about 180 yards, and arrows would carry to over 300 yards as an extreme range: in rapidity of fire it exceeded any musket before the days of breech-loading. The difficulty with archers was to keep them supplied with arrows. It was common for them to be reduced to picking up the enemy's missiles, or even tearing them out of the dead and returning them.

who was familiar with Wales in Henry II's reign, records the extraordinary powers of the South Wales archers. He himself saw at Abergavenny the iron points of arrows piercing the massive oak door four inches thick, while one of the Norman knights received a shaft that struck through his mail shirt, his mail breeches, his leg, the wood of his saddle, and sunk deep into the horse's flank.

Whether the English copied the longbow from the Welsh or not, it is further clear that longbowmen could not of themselves win battles. They shook the Scots at Falkirk, but, as we have seen, the cavalry took the credit of the victory; thirty thousand archers were said to have been with Edward II at Bannockburn, yet the battle was completely lost. Moreover, even granting that archers were effective against the Scots, they might not be equally good against the French. The Scots fought on foot, mostly armed with spears or pikes, but the French main strength lay in their mounted men-at-arms, and since the battle of Hastings it had been a universal belief in Europe that no infantry could stand before a charge of this heavy-armed feudal chivalry. It was not enough to have archers; the thing was to use them properly.

The prelude to the Hundred Years' War was played in Scotland. There the tactics which made the archer irresistible were developed; there, too, arose the first pretext for the Hundred Years' War, for the Scots had as usual sought help in a French alliance; there had been a fierce sea fight in the harbour of St. Mahé in Brittany between English and Gascon sailors on one side and Normans and French on the other, in which the French had the worst of it; and while Edward III was invading Scotland, Philip VI of France had poured an army into Edward's dukedom in Gascony.

The establishment of the line of Bruce on the Scottish throne was a crushing blow to the party who had still clung to Balliol and the English cause. They had been driven from Scotland, and their estates forfeited. When Robert Bruce died, and was succeeded by his son David, this handful of the "Disinherited" determined to make one last stroke to regain their estates. Edward gave them no help; but, gathering a scanty force, they landed in Fife, under the leadership

Battle of  
Dupplin, 1332.

of Edward Balliol and Henry de Beaumont. Never did cause seem more desperate. They were but 2000 strong, 500 men-at-arms, the rest archers. The Scottish force, under Mar, which advanced to meet them, was 22,000 men—eleven times their number.

Beaumont drew up his scanty force on a hillside, the men-at-arms, dismounted, in the middle; the archers, hidden in the heather, spread on the wings in a half-moon formation. The Scots advanced to the attack with one huge central column intended to crush the men-at-arms, while two smaller ones on the wings were to account for the archers. The weight of the charge drove back the "Disinherited's" centre, but, aided by the hill, they managed to stand, and for the moment the battle stayed, with the lances of the opponents locked tightly, and with scarce room to swing a sword. Meanwhile the archers had so plied the flank columns with arrows that they shrank in on the centre, and increased the pressure and confusion. The whole mass became wedged together helplessly. The men-at-arms hacked at the front ranks; the archers, who closed in on the flank at short range, riddled the rest. "More", says the chronicler, "fell by suffocation than the sword; the heap of the dead stood as high as a spear's length." The Scottish army was annihilated, while of the "Disinherited" some thirty men-at-arms fell, and not one single archer was killed.

This comparatively unknown battle of Dupplin, this victory of David over Goliath, is worth study, not because it led to any great results in Scottish history; Edward Balliol was indeed proclaimed king, and Edward III judged it a good occasion to strike in and support him, though both had soon to abandon their plans; but because it is the pattern of the tactics which made English arms for so long invincible. The essence was to dismount the men-at-arms; to take up a strong position and fight a defensive battle; to dispose the archers thrown forward on the wings under natural cover if it could be found, or support them with the infantry if natural cover failed. Then the enemy was left to attack; the infantry would stop the attack, and the archers would break it. It made little difference whether the attack was made by men on foot or by cavalry. The men on foot moved



more slowly and offered an easier mark, but the horseman was a larger mark, and the downfall of men and horses soon threw the charge into confusion.<sup>1</sup>

So the battles were won, not because the Englishman was braver, or a better fighter, but simply because, having a better weapon and a better system of tactics, the English armies were able to kill huge numbers of the enemy without suffering much themselves. This is what wins battles in all ages. When the musket had superseded the bow, the same system won again. It was thus that Wellington beat the French in the Peninsular war; by fighting in *line* against the French columns he got a better fire-control and an overwhelming rain of bullets at marks which could not be missed. The French, being in column, could not use their numbers to reply effectively to the converging fire that met them.

## § 2. *Crécy and Poitiers*

France provoked Edward to war by her invasion of Gascony in aid of the Scots. But Edward was by no means unwilling to embark on a war. One English king after another had ruled large possessions in France. Since John's day, however, these had dwindled. Gascony alone remained, and the fact that the French had been eating into it for some time was in itself quite sufficient provocation for war. Yet beyond this, the traditional policy of an adventurous English king was to seek to recover the lost provinces. If we may transplant a phrase out of its proper age, we might say that the natural field for English "expansion" in the fourteenth century lay in France. Edward went a step beyond his predecessors: even Henry II, whose domains in France were wider than those of the French king himself, acknowledged himself to hold those domains from the king. He was after all a vassal. Edward, however, boldly claimed the Crown of France as his own.

<sup>1</sup>The battle of Halidon Hill (1333) illustrates again the uselessness of the Scottish pikemen against archers. Edward was besieging Berwick. To relieve it the Scots had to beat his covering army, and were therefore obliged to attack. Their columns, advancing up the hill, were so riddled with arrows that very few reached the English lines. And when at length they broke and fled, Edward's mounted men cut them to pieces in the retreat.

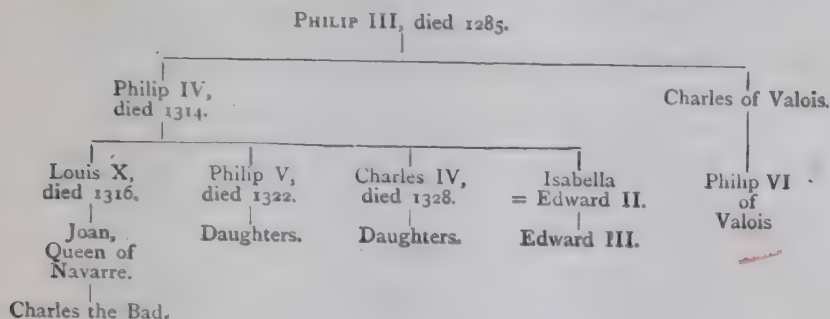
Thus the Hundred Years' War differs from all the wars between France and England which precede it. These, in the French king's eyes at all events, were civil wars or feudal wars; the struggle of a feudal tenant against his suzerain. The Hundred Years' War was a national war, in which Edward III and, after him, Henry V played the part of a foreign conqueror. Hence the bitter feeling which developed as the war continued.

Edward III's claim to the throne was a mixture of policy and ambition. It was policy, in so far as it gave a cloak of right to what would otherwise have seemed pure aggression, and it offered a reason to those French dependents such as the Flemings who were ready to fight against their French master, all the more if they could allege that they were not rebels in doing so. Moreover, England as a wool-growing land had a close connection with Flanders, the great centre of dyeing and clothmaking. But we may be sure that the ambition of adding the French Crown to the English one also attracted the king.

The claim itself to the throne was a poor one. The three sons of Philip IV<sup>1</sup> had reigned and died leaving no male heirs. Edward, through his mother Isabella, was Philip IV's grandson. The throne, however, had been given to Philip IV's nephew, Philip of Valois (Philip VI). The French argued that by the old custom of the Salian Franks (the so-called *Salic Law*) which governed the succession to the French throne, no woman could succeed, and that therefore Edward's claim through a woman was worthless. Edward refused to accept this argument. But by doing so he knocked the bottom out of his own case, for though the three brother kings had left no sons, they all had daughters, and one of these daughters had a son, Charles the Bad of Navarre. Thus, if the Salic law held, Philip of Valois was the rightful king; if it did not, Charles the Bad should be on the throne; either way Edward had no title. Moreover, having, in 1328, done homage to Philip VI for Gascony, he had tacitly admitted Philip's title, and barred his own. Legal reasoning, however, was of as little real value here as in Scot-

<sup>1</sup>The "fatal three", Louis X, Philip V, and Charles IV: compare the extinction of the house of Valois with Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III (also three brothers).

land in the days of Edward's grandfather. Armed men were the only arguments that would command a hearing.



Having then laid claim to the throne of France; having secured as allies his two brothers-in-law, the Emperor Louis of Bavaria and William of Hainault, as well as the Flemish leader Jacques van Artevelde; being enthusiastically supported at home by all classes, who voted supplies with that eager liberality which accompanies the beginning of a war, Edward opened his campaign. Two fields of operation offered. The north-east, which lay close to England and to his Flemish allies; and the south-west, where his own duchy of Gascony gave him a convenient base. That there was a certain sense of material advantage in Edward's methods, as well as the quixotic ambition which led him to claim the throne, appears in the fact that these two districts, the north-east and the south-west, were, commercially speaking, the richest in France, the centres respectively of the woollen industry and the wine trade. Merchants would readily support a king who was warring for the control of such rich markets.

War began in 1338, but the early years were singularly unfruitful. No battles took place on land; Edward's allies died or left him. The one achievement was the naval battle of Sluys where Philip tried to guard the Flemish coast, but Edward's fleet proved too strong for him. Even at sea we remark the supremacy of the archer, and the new English tactics. Edward used his ships, just as he was in the habit of using his men: they were grouped in threes, archers on the flanking ships, and men-at-arms on the centre one.

Sluys, 1340.

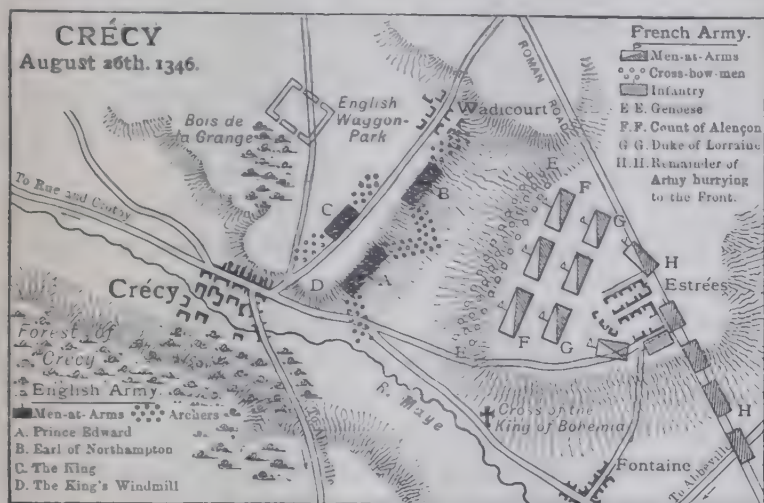


The archers shook the defence; the men-at-arms boarded and beat down what resistance remained. Save for the difference that the English made the attack instead of standing on the defensive, Sluys is on the water what all the battles of the time are on land.

It was not till 1346 that a decisive battle was fought. Edward landed a force near Cherbourg to divert the French from an attack on Gascony. Beyond this object, however, Campaign of Crécy. his plans do not appear skilful. He loitered up the Seine, giving Paris ample time to put itself in a state of defence, and allowing the French to gather in great force on the northern bank of the river. He failed to surprise Rouen, and, eventually cutting loose from his base in Normandy, hazarded a flank march across the country to join the Flemings. He gave the French the slip at Poissy, crossed the river, and, marching now in desperate haste, covered sixty miles in four days, and drew near the Somme. To his consternation the bridges were all broken, and the fords guarded. He moved down the river, getting into greater difficulties, for the river grew more and more difficult to cross. A French host was already at his heels, when a peasant betrayed to him the place of the very last ford on the river, Blanchetaque. By a moonlight march Edward crossed at low water—for the Somme there is tidal—and the rising tide prevented immediate pursuit. For the moment he was safe: he had secured a retreat to Flanders. He now made up his mind to fight, should the French pursue him too closely. A suitable position was not far to seek. He found it between Crécy and Wadicourt. The impenetrable forest of Crécy covered his right flank. His left was more vulnerable, though the village and orchards gave fair cover. The front of a mile and a quarter was not too wide for his force, which numbered probably about twenty thousand men. Rather more than a half were archers; the remainder were partly men-at-arms and partly light-armed Welsh spearmen. The army was drawn up on the edge of the downland, and the archers were advanced in zigzags at intervals in his line, so as to be able to pour in a flanking fire, while they were themselves able to draw back if need be, with their own flank

secured by the men-at-arms. The Black Prince commanded the right, the Earl of Northampton the left. The king himself held the reserve.

Edward had completed the drawing up of his force, when the French vanguard, still thinking they were chasing a flying foe, stumbled on it late in the afternoon. Philip ordered a halt; he wished to attack in formal battle-order the next day, but the feudal nobles of his army paid no heed. The vanguard would not retire; the others as they arrived pushed



zealously forward. Their only idea of war was to fight the enemy as soon as he was within reach.

The result was a disorderly battle, fought without method, purpose, or combination. The Genoese crossbowmen began with volleys of bolts that hardly reached the English lines, but the longbowmen's arrows fell among them with such force as to pierce helmets and mail. In a few moments they were broken, and were falling back in confusion. The first line of French horsemen, led by Alençon, did not wait for them to get clear, but charged, in their impatience, through them, thus entangling themselves hopelessly. On them beat the pitiless arrow storm, scarce a shaft missing its mark. Of this charge hardly a man reached the English line. Meanwhile, fresh French forces had

pushed forward and flung themselves into the *mêlée* with better success, for the blind King of Bohemia had the "one fair blow at the English" which he desired, and fell among the English spearmen. So the fight raged on, one charge after another as the French pressed on through the midst of their fallen comrades. Late in the afternoon the Black Prince was hard put to it, but not so hard that Edward thought it needful to bring the reserve into action. "Let the boy win his spurs:" thirty knights was all the aid he sent. At dusk the charges still went on and even into the darkness, but all shared the same fate. All night the English lay in their lines unaware of the complete havoc they had wrought. The next day revealed that the French had lost 1500 knights alone; the common soldiers brought up the total to near ten times the number, while the English loss was little over a hundred; only two knights were killed.

Crécy is generally reckoned among the decisive battles of the world. If completeness of victory is decisiveness, it deserves its place; it settled, too, the pretensions of the feudal chivalry who had been so long the military bullies of Christendom. But so far as the campaign was concerned, it settled nothing. Edward marched north and starved out Calais, turning out many of the French inhabitants, and putting a large English colony in their place. The survivors of the French nobles went home to wonder at their overthrow, but not to learn from it.

Ten years later the lesson was repeated. King John had replaced Philip on the French throne. Hostilities had languished owing to the plague of the Black Death, which had fallen on Europe in the meantime. In 1355 the war flared up again, this time in the south. The Black Prince led a huge army eastward from Bordeaux, gathering plunder on all sides. He repeated the raid the next year, this time striking northwards, and then reaching the Loire followed it westwards to the suburbs of Tours. Here he learnt that the French king had moved from Blois to cut off his retreat. So he withdrew, and making the best speed he could, though laden with plunder, reached Poitiers. The two armies just missed falling in with each other on the march. The Black Prince slipped past, and John came up with him at Maupertuis, about seven miles to the south.

Poitiers,  
1356.



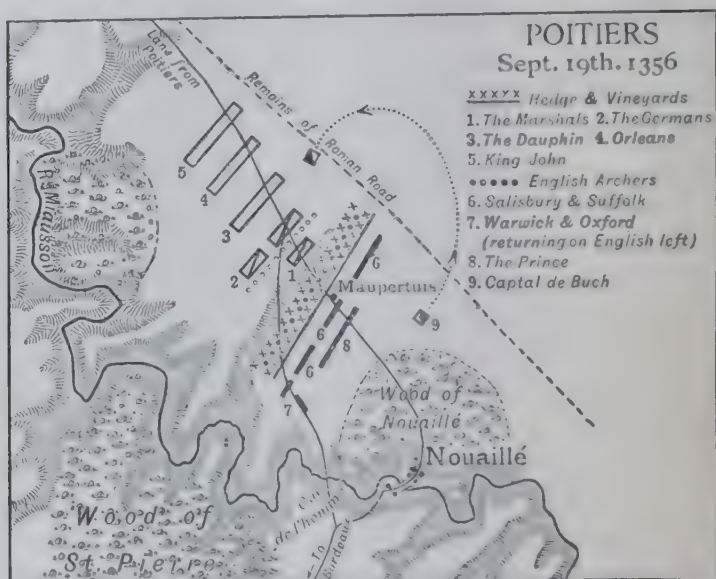
The Black Prince had about 7000 men, of whom 2500 were archers, the bulk of the remainder being men-at-arms with a few light troops; all were mounted. The French were about 20,000, but the levies just drawn from Poitiers were of poor quality. The English plight was so bad that on 18th September the Prince offered to release his prisoners and make a seven years' truce; but the French refused these terms. So on the next day the English made ready to resume their retreat, or fight if need were.

The English position covered the roads which led steeply down to the small, deep, wooded Miausson in the rear: a stone bridge crossed it at Nouaillé, a ford farther to the English left at Gué de l'Homme. Along the front of the position ran a hedge, and in front of the hedge were vineyards. The vines, thickly planted and growing some four feet high, gave the archers excellent cover, and at the same time were impenetrable to horsemen. To the north the country over which the French would advance was open and gently undulating. Edward's first idea was to leave his main force, under Salisbury, holding the vineyards, while he sent off the baggage, under the escort of Warwick, by the Gué de l'Homme. But the French came up, and he had to stand to fight. His front was strong and his left flank guarded by the river; his right was more vulnerable, but feudal armies did not manœuvre.

John had enough men with him to contain the English with one part, while he attacked and turned the English right with another. Probably he might have cut off the English retreat entirely. He was, however, determined to fight. Yet, with the disaster of Crécy in his mind, he determined to dismount the bulk of his men, probably on the advice of William Douglas, who recommended the Scottish plan. A forlorn hope led by two Marshals of France, and the first "battle" of the French, consisting mainly of German allies, kept their horses. This first attack was supported by the crossbowmen. The other three "battles", led by the Dauphin, Orleans, and the King himself, all trudged wearily on foot, for plate armour was so ponderous that it was hard work to walk a mile across heavy country.

In this array the battle was fought. The Marshals first charged, but the vines naturally made them "bunch" on to the

road, where they were easily shot down by the English first line under Salisbury, who also beat off the Germans and the crossbowmen, though not without stern fighting. Then came on the Dauphin's dismounted troops, and renewed the fight. All the English save a small reserve were now fully engaged, and it was only by the greatest efforts that the French were driven back once more. At this stage the English seemed to be on the point of defeat. Eight thousand fresh French troops still remained. Of



the Englishmen some were dead and many wounded: the archers were seeking everywhere for arrows, even pulling them from the slain; all were utterly worn out.

At this point the battle was won by fortune; and generalship. Orleans' division fled in the wreckage of the Dauphin's without striking a blow. So went half of the remainder. John, with the last division, advanced to the attack. The Prince did not wait. He ordered all who had horses to mount and charge; and the whole force, leaving the shelter of the hedge, rode and ran down on the enemy, and the armies locked in fierce encounter. At the critical moment a Gascon knight, the Captal de Buch, who had been sent round a hillock on the

English right to make a flank attack, fell on the French left rear. He had but 160 men; but this was enough. A panic spread; the fainthearted ran; brave men—and there were many in the French ranks—stayed to fight it out around their king, and were made prisoners. Never was there such a haul of captives made: the king, his son Philip, twenty-six great lords, and close on nineteen hundred knights and persons of consequence. The capture of the king alone made the victory important. It was bound to lead to a satisfactory peace. The Treaty of Bretigny, in 1360, gave Edward all the duchy of Aquitaine, the county of Ponthieu, and Calais in full sovereignty. John was also to pay a large ransom. In return, Edward gave up all claim to the throne of France and to the Plantagenet dominions of Normandy, Maine, and Anjou. In a word, he gave up the shadow and grasped the substance.

### § 3. *The First Period of Decline*

The Treaty of Bretigny (1360) marks the crest of the first wave of English success in France. The results may be summed up shortly under three heads. First, the acquisition of Aquitaine in full sovereignty, that is to say, free from Results of the war. all claims of overlordship on the part of the French Crown. Secondly, the establishment of a close connection between England and the Flemish cities, which is marked by: (*a*) the appearance of England as a sea power, wielding a supremacy of the sea, at any rate on the Channel; (*b*) by the growth of a busy trade in wool and woollen goods; and (*c*) by the holding of Calais as a door through which help might be given the Flemings, or attacks made on France. Thirdly, the perfecting of a new method of fighting, in which the old feudal chivalry became of little use when opposed to a combination of archers and infantry. It is well to bear in mind that these results were of solid value. Edward III's reign is sometimes described as being one of barren glory rather than of substantial gains: that is true in a sense only. Substantial gains were made: the fostering of the wool trade and a control of the chief markets for wool, the capturing of the wine trade of Gascony, the supremacy in the Narrow Seas, the invention of a



system of invincible tactics, were all substantial additions to England's power. As a nation she stood far higher in 1360 than in 1327. But the gains did not prove permanent, and so the glory became barren. Edward's war policy had definite enough aims, and for the time attained them; it is only condemned by its failure to hold what it had won.



If we pass over very briefly the first period of decline, we shall at any rate be following the traditional policy of most national histories. The truth is, that from 1360 till the beginning of Henry V's reign the interest of English history lies elsewhere than in foreign invasion. England had much to attend to at home. The Black Death (1349-50) had swept away nearly a half of the population: the effects of this catastrophe led to the Peasant Revolt of 1381. Then Wyclif and the Lollards filled

men's minds with religious questions: the last years of Edward III were occupied with struggles among the great families to get hold of the reins of power. The proceedings of John of Gaunt and the Appellants were a foretaste of the baronial quarrels which were to develop later into the Wars of the Roses. Were we merely tracing the chronological sequence of events, we should leave the Hundred Years' War and relate these events here; but as we occupy ourselves rather with logical sequences, we may postpone them and follow the story of the war.<sup>1</sup>

The first period of decline—the falling from the crest of the wave to the trough—was not marked by any striking events. It was inevitable that the Peace of Bretigny would be broken on the first occasion. It was too disastrous First period  
of decline. for France to submit to it quietly, and the barons of Aquitaine, who had been handed over to an English sovereign, soon gave the French king, Charles V, a chance of interfering. War began in 1369—this time on more cautious lines. The French had learnt that to fight great battles meant to receive crushing defeats. “If a storm rages over the land,” said Charles V, “it will disperse of itself. So will it be with the English.” His chief captain, Du Guesclin, never gave the English armies a chance of striking a blow. Both the Black Prince and John of Gaunt led armies into the heart of France, but met no enemy. The French shut themselves in the towns, and left the English to burn, plunder, and retreat. As in those days the only way of reducing a fortified town was by famine, it was hopeless to undertake a hasty siege. A few rebellious towns were captured. The Black Prince did take Limoges, but the horrible massacre of its defenders only made matters worse. Instead of striking terror, it made all rebels resolve to hold out to the last. Thus, in face of a national resistance, a war of sieges, skirmishes, and surprises, the small English forces were worsted and beaten in detail. England was indeed worn out. The Black Death had robbed her of men; the money was wellnigh spent; the country was exhausted with taxes and tired of the war; the great leader the Black Prince was dying. By degrees the French regained all Aquitaine and Gascony, except Bordeaux and Bayonne. Fortune had so changed,

<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix will be found a table giving the chronological order of these events.

that in 1377 England had to beat off French raids on Kent, and in Richard II's reign a French force encamped for a time in Sussex; but by this time the war had dwindled down. Now and again each country made a fleeting effort to molest the other; but for the most part time passed in a series of uneasy truces. Each enemy eyed the other, and waited for a chance. Both were too much hampered with feuds at home to be vigorous abroad.

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## 2. Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI

### § 1. *Agincourt*

It happened that England recovered her strength first. At the very time when Henry IV had seized the crown, had beaten the alliance of the Percies, Glendower, and the Scots, who were trying to overthrow him,<sup>1</sup> and had really gained a strong position, France was falling into ruin. The king, Charles VI, was mad: the parties of Burgundy and Orleans battled for the business of ruling his kingdom. The Duke of Burgundy, whose chief dominions were in Flanders, was strong in the north-east of France, and was supported by the towns and especially by the lower classes in Paris. The Orleanists or "Armagnacs" were the party of the nobles; their stronghold was south of the Loire. In 1407 the Burgundians murdered the Duke of Orleans, and from that time on the affairs of the country swayed about as first one party and then the other gained the mastery. Henry IV intrigued with both, finally inclining to the Armagnacs, and intending, as the price of his support, to win back the lost English provinces. How hopelessly distracted France was, is revealed when we read that an English army under Clarence landed in Normandy, and was able to march unchecked to Bordeaux. Even in the worst days of the Wars of the Roses we can hardly picture a French army marching practically unmolested, say, from Bristol to York.

Henry IV died, and left his schemes to his more ambitious

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. XX, Part III.



son Henry V. He was more startlingly successful than Edward III at his best. He became the acknowledged heir to the French Crown. Had he lived he would have been crowned King of France in Paris, as his infant son Henry VI actually was. But if Henry V's success was greater than Edward III's, his task was easier. He did not conquer France; but with the aid of one half of France he mastered the other half. How important the attitude of Burgundy was to the English cause is revealed by the fact that each change in the course of affairs corresponds with either a tightening or loosening of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance.

Henry V.  
Renewal of  
the war.

Henry IV had leant to the Armagnac side. At the end of his reign, however, son and father had not been on good terms; and the son, while enlarging his father's policy, chose to reverse his methods. The Armagnacs offered him the hand of Katherine, daughter to the French king, and as dowry the lost province of Aquitaine with 600,000 crowns in gold; but this offer, tempting as it was, did not satisfy Henry V's ambition. He wished to be King of France. Accordingly he boldly claimed all that Henry II had held, western France from the Somme to the Pyrenees; and when that was refused, he revived Edward III's title to the Crown. That this could only mean war did not in the least deter Henry, for war was what he wanted. He had a touch of narrow-minded fanaticism in his character, and seems to have looked on himself as destined by heaven to restore order to France; the war was to his mind a kind of crusade. Yet he was an unusually practical crusader, for, besides being a competent soldier, he had a sharp eye for his own advantage.

War then flamed out again in 1415. Both Commons and clergy gave Henry liberal grants of money. With some ten thousand men he landed in Normandy and besieged Harfleur. After a siege of five weeks he took it, but at the cost of about a third of his force. It was but a scanty triumph, since no attempt had been made to relieve the town; at this rate it would be long ere France was conquered. With no very clear object, save perhaps an imitation of Edward III's policy, Henry set off on a march from Harfleur along the coast to Calais.

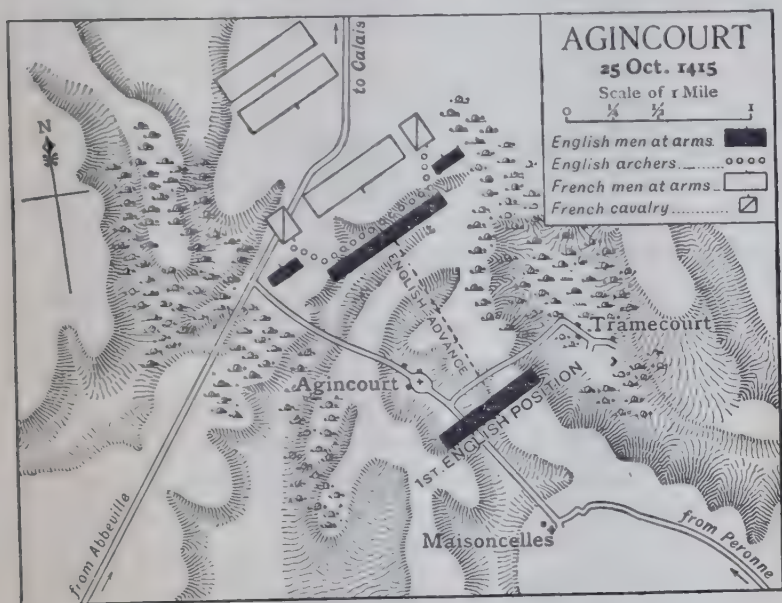
Campaign of  
Agincourt,  
1415.

Here, in the first period of the war, had the French taken advantage of their chances, he ought to have been beaten. The parties of Burgundy and Orleans had patched up a sort of peace, and, though the Burgundians gave only a lukewarm support, an army was gathering under the Constable D'Albret large enough to crush Henry if it could catch him. Henry was marching as fast as he could, keeping close to the coast; he had even mounted his archers, but the October of 1415 was wet, the roads heavy, and Henry had trouble in crossing the Somme. He had to go a long way up it before he could find a way across, every step taking him farther from Calais. This delay enabled the Constable to cross first, to get between the English and Calais, and to bar Henry's path at Agincourt with 30,000 men.

It seemed that the Constable could not lose. He had every military advantage on his side. He was vastly superior in numbers; being astride the enemy's line of retreat, he could fight or not as he pleased, and he could choose his ground. He had but to avoid a battle and Henry would be starved into submission; even if it proved too difficult to hold in the feudal array to the ignominy of winning without fighting, he could take up a defensive position, and let the English handful attack. There was indeed only one card in his hand that could lose him the game, and that was to attack the English at once. Of course this was, so to speak, the attractive lead—the French feudal array loved to play a bold game—none the less it was a fatal lead, for it would give Henry the chance of fighting the one kind of battle which an army outnumbered five or six to one could win, namely, a defensive battle with the advantage of a superior missile weapon. Crécy and Poitiers had already showed what was likely to come of such tactics. But feudal leaders were not students of military history.

The Battle of Agincourt bears a certain resemblance to Crécy and Poitiers rolled into one. The French fought on ground far too narrow for their numbers. They allowed the enemy to shelter his weak point, his flanks, by woods; Henry had taken the additional precaution of making the archers supply themselves with long, sharp-pointed stakes which were to be

stuck in the ground to check the French charges. D'Albret perhaps did not wish to fight at all: had he been anxious for a battle he could have fought before, directly Henry was over the Somme, but he had kept more or less at arm's length, and only converged slowly on his enemy's line of march. In any case the English waited two or three hours in their position at Agincourt and the French did not stir. They were close enough, however, for Henry to be able to compel an attack



without losing the advantage of his position. He moved his whole line forward to within range and halted them: the archers fixed their stakes and began to ply the French with their arrows. Thus the French were forced to attack. First came two small bodies of mounted men who were easily checked. The main attack, dismounted knights in armour, toiled painfully over the wet ploughland that lay between them and the English. So heavy were the men and so deep the mud that no real attack was driven home; the mass stuck, a splendid mark for the English archers. When it had been well riddled, the English advanced and flung themselves on it. Being lightly armed, many of them without defensive armour save stout leather



coats, they could move freely when the enemy could not. Through the woods on the wing moved bodies of men-at-arms to take the French in flank. Thus the French vanguard and then the main line were overthrown and butchered, the dead lying two or three deep. The third division of the French army, shaken by the fate of its comrades, hardly fought. Though it alone far outnumbered Henry's entire force, it broke and fled at the first onslaught.

Agincourt taught no lessons in the art of war that had not been already read at Crécy and Poitiers. The fighting of a defensive battle against odds, and the value of the English bowmen is common to all. The narrow front with guarded flanks, the attack spent before it struck, are Crécy. The sharp stakes stand for the hedge at Poitiers. To Poitiers, too, belong the dismounted attack made by the French, the crushing English counter-attack, the flight of a whole French division without striking a blow. The student may find it amusing to draw other parallels. But the parallel which would have come home most forcibly to a Frenchman fleeing from the field on that fatal 14th of October, was that once more a pitched battle had gone near to ruin France; that there were 8000 of the best blood in France lying dead on the field, among them the Constable, Anthony of Brabant (Burgundy's brother), the Dukes of Bar and Alençon, with the lesser nobility round them in hundreds; and the Dukes of Bourbon and Orleans, together with 1500 other knights, were prisoners. England has in the course of her history dealt France many staggering blows on the battlefield. Sometimes the combatants have been fairly matched in numbers as they were in Marlborough's "Quadrilateral",<sup>1</sup> or in Wellington's sequence of victories in the Peninsula, or again at Waterloo. At other times, David, with the aid of a superior missile weapon, has brought down Goliath: the few have prevailed over the many. Agincourt is perhaps the most striking of all, not only in the disparity of odds, but in the completeness of the wreckage.

The blow fell heaviest on the Orleanists. The main share of the dead was theirs, and they took the whole of the dishonour.

<sup>1</sup> "B.R.O.M. 4.6.8.9."

Burgundy withdrew what lukewarm support he had hitherto given, and Henry was left to pursue his course of conquest. Three years of sieges followed, in which the most notable was that of Rouen, where the women and children turned out by the defenders from the hard-pressed town were callously and cruelly allowed to starve between the walls and Henry's lines. In 1419 Pontoise fell, and there was nothing left to bar Henry's march to Paris.

So far Henry had profited by the military skill which had given him an unexpected triumph over one great French army, and the paralysing disunion between Burgundy and Orleans which had prevented the collecting of another; but hitherto neither faction had actively helped him. Burgundy had remained like Achilles sulking in his tent—a malevolent neutral. Now, however, a piece of supreme and wicked folly was to turn that neutrality into enmity. A meeting was arranged at Montereau between the Burgundians and Armagnacs. John of Burgundy rashly crossed the barrier on the bridge that severed the two factions. In the sight of his followers he was set on and stabbed by Tannegui du Châtel, a violent Armagnac and friend of the Dauphin. It was but a retort for 1407. Blood will have blood. But this treacherous murder threw the Burgundians into the arms of the English. By the Treaty of Troyes, Katherine, the daughter of Charles VI, was pledged to Henry in marriage: he was recognized as heir to the French throne to the exclusion of the Dauphin; Philip, the new Duke of Burgundy, engaged to support him. In the autumn of 1420 Henry entered Paris in triumph with his bride.

Murder of the Duke of Burgundy. Anglo-Burgundian alliance.

Treaty of Troyes, 1420.

## § 2. *The Second Period of Decline*

The Treaty of Troyes marks the crest of the second wave. It was indeed higher and more imposing than the first. Instead of taking a quarter of France, the English king had married the French king's daughter, and was hailed as his heir. Everyone expected he would come to the throne. This, indeed, the accident of his early death prevented. Had he lived another two months he would have been crowned king in Paris. As it

was, his infant son Henry VI was proclaimed in his place. And then slowly but surely the English power crumbled away. The apparent explanation is that, so long as the strong king lived, things went well, and that when an infant took his place they went awry. This, however, is not the real explanation.

No doubt Henry V's vigour and military skill were hard to replace. Yet it was not his death that proved fatal to the English

English  
military  
supremacy.

cause. Henry's brother, the Duke of Bedford, took up the post of Regent of France, and for six years, from 1422 to 1428, the English kept their ascendancy

in the field, and made some progress in driving the Armagnacs southward. The only check between Agincourt and the relief

Beaugé, 1421.

of Orleans by Joan of Arc occurred at Beaugé, where the Duke of Clarence, attempting a surprise

with a body of cavalry, was himself killed and his force routed. The chief share of the victory was won by the Scottish troops, who, keeping up the traditional policy of an alliance with France, had taken the field with the French. The Pope on hearing the news exultantly remarked, "Truly the Scots are a cure for the English". Beaugé, although a startling success for French arms, since it was so long since they had met with any, was after all a small affair, and quite isolated. After it English victories began again. At Crevant in 1423 and Verneuil in 1424 the French and Scots were utterly defeated. Scotland abandoned the war. She had not proved as permanent a cure as the Pope had imagined. And finally one cannot take the one disaster of Beaugé as typical of the weaker rule of Henry VI, for the excellent reason that the battle was in Henry V's reign.

When Henry V lay dying he showed clearly enough in his last words what was the prop of the English power in France, and the means by which it might be shaken. "I beg you all," said he, "to see that you have no quarrel with my fair brother of Burgundy, and above

Death of  
Henry V,  
1422.

all to prevent from this my fair brother, Humphrey; for if that arrive, God help us." The friendship of Burgundy was, indeed, the key of the situation. We must see on what this friendship was based, and how it was finally broken.

The Burgundian  
alliance.





One thing has been seen already; the spirit of revenge for the murder of Duke John. But note also that constant coupling of foreign policy with marriage policy. Just as Henry V had secured the help of the court party by his marriage with Katherine, so Bedford bound the young Duke of Burgundy to him by marrying his sister, Anne of Burgundy. The Burgundian alliance rested more on a family

Marriage policy.

bond between the chiefs than on affection between the subjects. Yet a doubter would scarcely take the side of the Armagnacs, for they had, so far, displayed no mark of political capacity. They had failed in everything they attempted. Even the fervent patriot is apt to grow chill when he is always the loser. But were circumstances to change: were parties to stand out in their true light: were the prosperous traitors of Burgundians to lose their prosperity, and the unsuccessful patriots of Orleanists to happen on success: then, as if by magic, all would be changed. Each party would be revealed in its naked truth—Orleanist as patriot, Burgundian as traitor, and Englishman as a national enemy.

This magic change came with the coming of the Maid of Orleans, commonly called Joan of Arc.<sup>1</sup> She was a peasant girl from Domremy on the borders of Champagne, who believed that she had been called by angel voices to deliver her country, drive out the invader, and crown Charles VII at Rheims. She went to Court and persuaded the king to accept her help. Clad in armour, and riding at the head of her troops, by her simple faith and piety she restored the hopes of the French. Salisbury had formed the siege of Orleans, the last Armagnac stronghold on the Loire, and was pressing it hard. When the Maid appeared before the town, broke into the city, drove off the besiegers, and defeated Talbot at Patay, it was as if the spell which had overcast French arms was broken. Heaven, hitherto averse, had taken pity on the French national cause. Not only was the relief of Orleans an immense military success, for it assured to the Armagnacs a gateway into the northern territory, whence they could harass the English, but its moral effect was still greater. The Maid's career was indeed short. She did see Charles VII crowned at Rheims in the centre of the enemy's country, but her army was beaten off from Paris. In 1430 she was captured at Compiègne, and in the next year burnt as a witch at Rouen. That piece of ferocity did not mend matters. She was dead, but the spirit which she had aroused lived after her. "Before her day," says the chronicler, "two hundred English would drive five hundred French before

<sup>1</sup> Her right name is Jeanne d'Arc.

them; but now two hundred French would beat four hundred English." Perhaps it must not all be put down to the Maid. The fact is that the quality of the French soldiers was improving. The disobedient, clumsy, foolhardy, feudal array no longer came into the field, for the best of reasons: most of it was dead. It was replaced by professional soldiers who knew their work, officered by men who would not run needless risk. Repeated disasters had at last taught the French not to hazard all on a pitched battle. And there was another cause at work. Sooner or later the curse of foreign invasion will weld a country into union. We have seen this in Scotland; we may observe it again in France. The burning of Joan of Arc did no more good to the English cause than the hanging of Wallace. It was no longer possible to say as Shakespeare makes King Henry say after Agincourt:

"O God Thy arm was here;  
And not to us but to Thine arm alone  
Ascribe we victory".

The soldier who looked on at the Maid's martyrdom and uneasily muttered, "We have burnt a saint", only voiced what many felt, that a curse had indeed come on the English cause.

Joan of Arc had fought and died. The Armagnac cause was lifting its head. At the same time the union between England and Burgundy began to give way. Gloucester and Henry V had rightly distrusted his "fair Burgundy, 1424. brother", Humphrey of Gloucester. Humphrey had already given great offence to the Duke of Burgundy by marrying Jacqueline of Hainault, a vassal whose dominions Burgundy had expected to secure for himself. He even went so far as to lead an army into Hainault against the Burgundians. Still worse was to come. In 1432 died Anne of Burgundy, Bedford's wife. This of itself was a blow to the alliance, but Bedford made matters worse by marrying the sister of the Count of St. Pol. St. Pol lay on the borders between France and Burgundy; the Count was one of these waverers who took, now one side, now the other. Bedford wished to attach him to England, but he forgot that in doing so he would offend Bur-



gundy. From that moment the Duke began to draw off from the English side. A congress met at Arras in 1435, when the

Congress of  
Arras, 1435.  
Breach with  
Burgundy.

French offered to cede Normandy and Aquitaine in full sovereignty, if the English would abandon the claim on the throne. These terms—better than those which Edward took at Bretigny—were foolishly refused. Thereon Burgundy went over to the French; in the same year Bedford, whose ability alone had kept the English cause together, died. From that time onward the English cause in France was a lost cause.

The eighteen years from 1435 to 1453 form the last stage of the Hundred Years' War, a period of English disaster. Step

The last stage,  
1435-53.

by step we were beaten back. One small garrison after another was overcome. The year 1436 saw the French regain Paris; and, more ominous still, the Duke of Burgundy besieged Calais. Though all went wrong we showed a wonderful pertinacity in resisting. One noble after another, Warwick, York, Somerset, went to France and failed, yet none dared advise peace. One man had the courage to yield some in order to preserve the rest; William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, negotiated a truce, ceded Maine and Touraine, and arranged a marriage between Henry and Margaret of Anjou; yet the

peace proved acutely unpopular; it is true that the French would hardly have kept it long, but it was the English who broke it, within four years of its making. And Suffolk scarcely survived his peace; he was impeached and banished, but his enemies did not mean to let him go. They waylaid his ship, seized him, and, using the gunwale of a boat as the block, caused his head to be hewed off.

The truth is, that, in 1450, England had fallen sick of the very disease from which France was recovering—madness in the head and paralysis in the members. For Charles VI we read Henry VI; for Burgundian and Armagnac, York and Lancaster; but the symptoms were the same. The court was surrounded by nobles all seeking their own advantage; private feuds came before patriotism. Neither party had the energy to stave off further disaster in France, nor the moral courage to withdraw. They could only be active in fault-finding.

In 1453 Talbot led some six thousand men to drive off the French force besieging Châtillon on the Dordogne. His command was not much less than Henry V's at Agincourt, but he had men of different mettle against him. Battle of  
Châtillon. The French withdrew to their entrenched camp, beat off Talbot's charge, and eventually scattered his whole force in rout. Talbot himself was slain, "very old and worn with years". And with his death a war which was also "very old and worn with years" came to an end.

The close of the Hundred Years' War marks an epoch in English history. We have seen two distinct stages of English wars with France. The first belongs to the reigns of the Norman and Angevin kings, and was the natural result of English kings holding a double position, in being Dukes of Normandy and Aquitaine, Counts of Anjou and Maine. These wars were essentially feudal struggles between a feudal superior and turbulent feudal barons. The second stage is that of the Hundred Years' War, in which both Edward III and Henry V asserted a claim to be Kings of France; one wrested from France the great duchy of Aquitaine in full sovereignty; the other actually won the crown for his son. These were not feudal, but national struggles. It was not the Duke of Normandy against the King of France, but England against France. The enterprise of English politics was turned to conquest in France. France was regarded as Change in  
English policy. the natural field of English expansion. After many ups and downs this policy failed and was abandoned. When we again take up the story of English foreign policy under the Tudors we shall find that it has undergone a complete change. Wars with France did not indeed cease, but they were no longer wars of conquest. Further, England no longer thirsts for military glory. A new field of ambition has opened. Hence forth her eyes turn to the sea and across it to the New World.

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## XVIII. The Black Death and the Peasant Revolt

In following the Hundred Years' War to its end the domestic history of England has been passed by. We must return to the reign of Edward III to trace the outcome of three important historical events. The first of these is the Black Death, which left so deep a mark on the condition of the labourers and their dealings with the landowners; the second is the work of John Wyclif and the Lollards; and the third is that development of Parliament, which promised well, and yet proved premature, leading in its breakdown to the Wars of the Roses. We leave military history, and take up questions first of social history, then of religion, and finally turn to genealogy and those complicated matters of family relations and family ambition which are at the root of the trouble between the Red Rose and the White.

The Norman Conquest left the class who cultivated the land in the position of serfs. They were "bound to the land" (*glebae ascripti*) and had to give to their lords so many days' work each week ("week work") and certain extra days' work at the busy season of haymaking, harvest, and ploughing ("boon work"). Besides these they paid small "dues" of eggs, fowls, and so on. So long as these services and dues were paid, they might expect to remain in possession of the small plots of ground on the produce of which they lived, for although it was by no means clear that the law gave them any security of tenure, or would interfere at all between them and their masters, no lord would be tempted to drive off a well-behaved serf, since to do so would be to lose his labour. As time went on, however, many of the serfs *commuted* their services; that is to say, they had come to an arrangement with their lords to pay money instead of service; for example, if a man's labour was reckoned at twopence a day, he would pay sixpence a week if he had owed three days' work, and further

**Commutation  
of Service.**



amounts for extra days. The plan was convenient for both parties: the serf got more time to work on his own plot of land; the lord got money with which he could hire labourers, and was saved the trouble of continually striving to compel unwilling or lazy serfs to do their work for him.

This plan of "commuting" services for money was spreading gradually over the country, but it was not complete, when it was interrupted by a disaster. This was the Black Death, The Black Death. a fearful plague which ravaged our island from 1347 to 1350. At least one-third of the whole population perished. It is literally true that often the living could scarce bury the dead. In the diocese of Norwich two-thirds of the parish clergy died: in a religious house at Heveringland prior and canons died to a man: of the sixty monks at St. Albans only thirteen survived. From what befell the ecclesiastics we can judge the mortality of laymen. Indeed, high and low, rich and poor, town and country fell before the pestilence. The manor rolls, which record changes among the tenants on an estate, show that often whole families were swept off, leaving none to inherit the land.

It was in these rural districts that the effect was most felt. It is plain that labour would become very hard to get; and, further, since at the height of the plague men Rise in Wages. were so terrified that they left the harvest to rot ungathered in the fields, corn became scarce. This caused a rise in prices; and as prices rose, and labourers were few, we should be prepared to find a rise in wages also. In fact, this is what happened. Wages rose sharply.

This all hit the landowners hard. To begin with, many of their tenants were dead, some without leaving heirs; and so they lost the payments for commuted service which Difficulties of the Lords. these had owed. Further, they lost in another way. They had commuted services at the old rate of wages. They accepted, say 2*d.* a day, since for 2*d.* they could hire a labourer who would do the serf's work. But if wages doubled, the 2*d.* which represented a day's labour would only hire half a day's labour. And the rise was more than double. It was a common complaint that whereas a woman's labour had cost

$\frac{1}{2}d.$  a day, now it cost  $2d.$  or  $3d.$  Hence ruin stared the lord in the face if he had to receive at the old rates and pay at the new ones.

Something clearly had to be done; and as the landowners were strong in Parliament, we shall find their policy in tracing what Parliament did. The first idea was to check this rise in wages which seemed to them ruinous. No injustice was intended, because Parliament meant to check the rise in prices also; if prices remained the same, it was argued, there was no need for wages to rise.

We are not used to seeing Parliament meddle in the matter of prices at all.<sup>1</sup> Nowadays these are left to be adjusted by the conditions of supply and demand. Men of the fourteenth century took an entirely different view. Regulations about prices and wages did not seem in their day impossible or absurd as they may seem to us, because as a matter of fact almost all trades were under such rules. Every trade had its craft guild, which fixed the price at which its wares should be sold—a price that was supposed to be “fair” both to the buyer and the seller. Parliament was only attempting to do for the country what the craft guilds did for the towns.

In the series of laws called the Statutes of Labourers,<sup>2</sup> labourers were ordered to take the “old” rate of wages—that is to say, the rate current in 1347. It was one thing to make the order, and another to enforce it. The task proved too big. The authority of Parliament was not very active over all England at the best of times in the fourteenth century; but when, owing to the Black Death, all local courts were paralysed, laws were easily evaded. The rise in prices went on; and so long as prices did not fall, men could not live on the old wages. Yet the lords could not afford to see their estates left uncultivated: it were better to lose half than lose all; better to give higher wages than have no labourers. Thus many lords were tempted to break the very laws which were intended to

<sup>1</sup> The Labour Party at times advocate that Parliament should fix a minimum wage; and something of this kind is done in many industries by their trades' unions. But no attempt to regulate prices is advocated.

<sup>2</sup> Issued by proclamation in 1349; enacted as a Statute in 1351; repeated with additional penalties in 1357 and 1360.

protect them, by offering the higher wages which Parliament prohibited. Parliament truly showed no lack of vigour or courage in its opinions. It reinforced the Statute of Labourers by threats of imprisonment, branding with a hot iron, slavery, and even death. But even ferocious penalties will not make men obey impossible laws. If it was a choice between the certainty of starvation and the chance of punishment, none could doubt what the choice would be.

Here stood revealed the class interest of Parliament. We may find a justification in theory for their action: it may be allowed that they meant no wrong. But when their remedy failed, the selfishness of the landowners—and the landowners meant Parliament under another name—is betrayed in the obstinate savageness which added penalty to penalty to drive men into suffering. England was on the threshold of the first great struggle between labour and capital: the struggle between “we cannot” and “we will make you”.

The policy of trying to put the clock back failed: it was bound to fail. Some landowners, untaught by the first failure, tried to go further back and compel the serfs to pay their services again. This was hopeless. Men who have nearly gained freedom will not tamely consent to lose what they have won. Other landowners took to sheep-farming instead of corn-growing, and thrived on that, just when their old enemies the serfs were looking forward to their ruin. In fact all the hopes which the serfs were cherishing seemed to be fading, and things becoming worse instead of better. This infuriated them; so did the Statutes of Labourers, which hindered them from getting a fair wage at home or from moving away to get work where wages were better. Discontented men clamoured against the lords. A Kentish priest, named John Ball, preached to the serfs, “Things will never go right in England so long as there be villeins and gentlemen; by what right are they whom we call lords greater than we?” and his teaching was echoed in the rhyme that ran through England—

Hostility between  
Peasants and  
Landowners.

John Ball and  
the Poll Tax.

“When Adam delved and Eve span  
Who was then the gentleman?”



## 186 BLACK DEATH AND PEASANT REVOLT

Rebellion only waited for an occasion, and the King's advisers gave it. They were at their wits' end for money. In 1377 a poll tax of carefully graduated amount had been taken. In 1380 the tax was repeated, but much less distinction was now drawn between rich and poor. The wealthiest paid but a pound; even the poorest paid a shilling. As a shilling at the legal rates of wages represented about a whole week's wage, the oppressiveness of it may easily be understood. It caused the smouldering discontent to burst into flames. In 1381 risings took place in East Anglia, and in all the counties near London. The most pressing danger came from the Kentishmen. Under their leader, Wat Tyler, they rolled on towards the capital, burning manor houses and the court rolls, which held the record of their serfdom, and hanging the lawyers "for", as they said, "not till these be dead would England enjoy its freedom again". The artisans of the city opened the gates. John of Gaunt, the young king's uncle, who was practically ruler of the kingdom, was absent in the north, the rioters pillaged and burnt his palace at the Savoy; they forced their way into the Tower, and murdered the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Treasurer, who had proposed the hated poll tax. Panic seized the Court, but King Richard II, a boy of sixteen, remained cool at a time when there was the utmost need of courage and coolness. He pacified the Essex rioters at Mile-End by granting them the freedom which they demanded, and as a pledge caused royal banners to be delivered to the men of each shire as a sign that they were no more serfs, and that they were pardoned for their rebellion. Content with this, many went home, "but the great venom still remained behind" in the ringleaders, Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Ball. Next day the King went to meet the Kentishmen at Smithfield. Their leader, Wat Tyler, rode up so near to the King that "his horse's head touched the croup of the King's saddle", and began a wordy wrangle with the King's attendants. Walworth, Mayor of London, thinking that he meant to attack the King, cut him down. The mob were bending their bows to shoot at the royal party when Richard rode forward alone and shouted to them: "I will be

The Peasant  
Revolt.

Richard II  
and the  
Rebels.

your leader', and by fair words and promises got them to disperse quietly.

This exhibition of opportune bravery was worthy of the son of the Black Prince: unhappily the end was less creditable. The promises were not kept. True that the King had, End of the Revolt in promising freedom, promised more than he should have done. He was giving what was not his to give; granting away the property of the landowners, for as we have seen the right to command the labour of serfs was property in the strictest sense of the word. Still, seeing that the King had saved the life of himself and his friends by his pledges, some effort should have been made to keep them. Unluckily the continued rioting in the Eastern counties, the burnings, murders, and brutalities, made it difficult to pardon the rioters. So, the first crisis over, the King employed force, and put down the Peasant Revolt with great severity.

Thus injustice had led to violence, as it often does, and neither party had gained. In few cases were the lords able to force their serfs to pay services again; on the other hand, many rioters were hanged, and the rebels did not get the abolition of serfdom which they had demanded.

Since labour could not be obtained at the old rates, nor services re-exacted without danger of violence and murder, it was necessary to pay the new rates, or to do with Land Let on Lease. less labour. Some lords granted land on lease to tenants for a rent, giving them stock as well as land. Thus the tenant had to find the labour; the lord was free of the difficulty. Here we have the beginnings of the modern farmer, a person who stands between the labourer and the landowner. Others, however, met the difficulty in another way. There was a great demand at the time for wool, and English wool was then the best that could be had. So, many Sheep-farming. lords started sheep-farming instead of arable farming. It paid better, because less labour was needed. Many labourers were required for a large arable farm; but when it was laid down in grass one or two shepherds could tend all the sheep on it.

Thus sheep-farming led to many men being out of employ-

ment; and as under the old system the serfs' small patches of land were often mixed up with the wide holdings of the land-owner, now the latter came to wish to evict the serfs and take their land for sheep-farms. He enclosed also the "waste" or common land on which the serfs had pastured their cattle, and this, too, made it hard for the serfs to keep their holdings. Thus the landowners who had at first struggled to keep their serfs, ended by trying to drive them off altogether. No doubt great misery was often caused by this depopulation. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Parliament tried to stop this process of enclosure for sheep-farms, but without much result.

So in the end the effects of the Black Death were extraordinarily wide. It changed the face of rural England. It broke up the old "manorial system": it prepared the way for modern conditions, under which land is let at a money rent: it did much to consolidate properties, and gave thereby the chance for the trying of better methods of farming: and in the end it caused serfdom to disappear. It was not that the peasants won freedom immediately by their revolt, for in some cases the revolt made their chains tighter. Yet this was only for the time. By degrees the labour of serfs came to be no longer required; and the lords granted freedom easily since serfdom was no longer worth keeping. The boon to the peasants, however, was an inestimable one. Their prayer had been granted—"Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the poor: that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them".

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## XIX. Wyclif and the Lollards

More than a hundred years before Martin Luther began his dispute with the Roman Church which ended in the Reformation, England had seen a churchman start on a very similar career. The story of John Wyclif and his followers, the Lollards, shows clearly that England was dissatisfied with the



authority of the Pope long before the time came when the nation broke away from the Roman authority, and the Church in England became National.

The worst part of John's quarrel with the Pope had been that it opened the door to interference and taxation from Rome. This showed itself in Henry III's reign, when that king was flattered by the popes into making loans of money to help the papacy in its final struggle against the empire in the person of Frederick II and his descendants. England was regarded by the popes as a "well of wealth from which they could draw unlimitedly". A very great deal of English land was in the hands of churchmen, and the popes strove continually to keep the churchmen under their own control, and cut them loose from the control of the State. For example, Pope Boniface VIII, in his bull, "Clericis Laicos", directed the clergy to pay no taxes to King Edward I unless by his consent. Edward retaliated by outlawing the clergy who refused to pay, and brought Boniface to withdraw. None the less, the independence of the clergy from the State was a point for which the popes strove steadily, and which the State was sure to resent.

In Edward III's reign this anti-papal feeling became very strong. Men saw a great deal of money being sent to the Papal Court, and they did not think it right that they should pay it; they saw, too, a great many foreigners who were appointed by the Pope holding rich livings, deaneries, and high posts in the Church, and they would have preferred that Englishmen should have these posts. They saw a few churchmen, each holding many livings, and perhaps never going near some of them, and they contrasted the fine clothes and crowds of servants of these men with the poverty of the parish priests. It seemed to them that these rich churchmen neglected their duty, and thought more of the good things of this world than it was right for them to do. "God", they said, "gave His people to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn."

The feeling of the time is reflected very strongly by Chaucer, who, in the Prologue of his *Canterbury Tales*, hits off all the weak points of the churchmen. He describes the Prioress as dainty, frivolous, and amiable, wearing

Dislike of  
the papacy.

Chaucer and  
the churchmen

a brooch with the motto, "Amor Vincit Omnia", and so soft-hearted that she would weep if she saw a mouse in a trap; the Monk, "full fat and in good poynt", who loved hunting and gaudy apparel more than

"Upon a book in cloystre alway to poure,  
Or swynke (work) with his handes, and laboure  
As Austyn<sup>1</sup> bid";

the Friar, an "easy man" to give penance, beloved and familiar with womankind, and

"The beste beggere in his hous,  
For though a widowe hadde nocht oo schoo (one shoe),  
So plesaunt was his *In Principio*,  
Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente";

the Summoner, who taught that "purse was the Archdeacon's hell", but did not act up to his principles; the Pardoner, with wallet

"Bretful of pardouns come from Rome all hot,  
Who made the parsoun and the people his apes".

We must not think that all the churchmen in England were negligent or careless; there were many then—as there always have been—who were bent on doing their duty to the utmost. Witness Chaucer's Poor Parson, who

"Waited after no pompe and reverence,  
But Christe's lore and His apostles twelve  
He taughte, but first he folwede it himselve".

Unfortunately it was not, for the most part, these men who were in high places. Bishops and the greater men were mostly little known in the countryside; monks led retired and sometimes lazy lives in their monasteries, but no one saw them. The bitterest feeling was aroused by the friars, for they were in daily contact with the people.

That the friars, especially the Dominican and Franciscan Friars, should be the object of this violent dislike is at first sight not a little curious, for these orders were the result of one of those periodical "revivals" in religion which aimed at bringing the Church into more intimate connection with the poor, and giving them practical help and teaching.

The mendicant orders.

<sup>1</sup> Augustine's rule, "*Laborare est orare*".

Both orders began early in the thirteenth century. St. Dominic founded his—the Black Friars—to combat heresy and to strengthen faith. They were accordingly preachers and teachers; men of learning and zeal. St. Francis bade his followers show, by the example of a pure, simple, cheerful, and contented life and charitable acts, what the true followers of Christ should be. Hence his followers<sup>1</sup>—the Grey Friars—were to be like the Apostles, unlearned men, without property, living in poverty amongst the poor, healing the sick and succouring the wretched. For many years both Black Friars and Grey Friars did an enormous amount of good, the Franciscans especially being real benefactors of the poor. By degrees, however, popular admiration became too much for them. Each order strove to copy and outdo its neighbour. The Franciscans copied the Dominican learning, and lost their simplicity; the Dominicans borrowed the vow of apostolic poverty, and broke it. Then both sets of friars began to accumulate wealth, not for themselves, but for their orders. Thus, becoming rich and learned, they deserted the habitations of the poor, going instead among the well-to-do, or to the universities, where they became great scholars, but no longer teachers of what they had first been sent to teach, the simple message of Christ. And those who remained scattered over the country were disliked because, being an order founded by a papal decree, they were obedient to the Pope; they were not obliged to obey the English bishops; they interfered between the parish priest and his flock; they intercepted a great deal of charity for their own order; and as there were occasional black sheep among them, as among all ranks of men, the orders got a bad name. Perhaps jealousy of their popularity and success will account for some of the abuse, but no doubt a good deal of the complaint was well founded.

All these things helped to rouse a feeling of hostility to the clergy, and especially to the popes; and, to make matters worse, the popes themselves had at this time fallen on evil days. First of all, they had been unwise enough to leave Rome and live at Avignon in France, and so they fell much into the power of the kings of France.

The popes  
at Avignon;  
"the Baby-  
lonish capti-  
vity", 1309-78.

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis had no wish to found an order. This was done after his death.



Englishmen hated France, with which they were carrying on a prolonged war, and included in their hate popes who appeared to be French popes. And the Avignon popes certainly were men of low aims, more interested in the getting of money than they should have been. They strove to find rich posts for all their friends; they reserved the right of appointing to all benefices left vacant by any appointment they made, a claim which enormously extended their patronage; and as the popes received "annates" or firstfruits from every benefice to which a churchman was preferred, they arranged their preferments so as to get as much in annates as they could; they often granted "provisions", preferments made in advance, before the holder of an office was dead. Incessant disputes about elections all led to appeals to the courts at Avignon, and much money was gathered over these suits. Clement VI, who particularly distinguished himself by gathering money in this way, remarked with a cynical laugh that none of his predecessors had known how to be popes.

These usurpations of the popes did not go entirely unchecked. In 1351 the statute of *Provisors* was passed, which rendered persons who accepted papal provisions liable to imprisonment, and declared that all appointments to which the Pope nominated should pass for that turn to the king. This was followed, in 1353, by the statute of *Præmunire*, which forbade appeals being made to foreign courts, and in 1393 the statute was repeated, in a more strict form, by mentioning that the getting of processes, excommunications, and bulls from Rome<sup>1</sup> would incur the penalties of *præmunire*, i.e. forfeiture of goods and imprisonment at the king's pleasure. These acts were strong enough, but they were not often enforced. The truth was that generally Pope and king could arrange to make and approve such appointments as would suit them both. They had more to gain by being on good terms than by quarrelling. Now and again, when the king was displeased, these statutes would be enforced; normally they were allowed to be idle. Between the intrusions of kings and popes, however, the Church suffered grievously; the rights of chapters were everywhere overridden; and private patrons looked ruefully

Legislation  
against papal  
claims. Pro-  
visions and  
Præmunire.

<sup>1</sup> Whither the popes had returned in 1378.

on the day when Pontius Pilate and Herod made friends against them.

The latter part of Edward III's reign was, as we see, one of those periods when king and Pope were not friendly. Still worse days were in store for the papacy. In 1378 it had returned to Rome, but the Pope who was chosen, The Great Schism, 1378. Urban VI, proved so violent and insulting to his cardinals that a number of them seceded from him and set up an anti-Pope, Clement VII. Europe was immediately divided into two camps, one supporting the Roman Pope, the other the Avignonese. Each Pope denounced the other as a schismatic; it was not long before pious men, witnessing this indecent contest, began to think that the fault lay with the papacy itself. This opinion was strengthened by the increasing taxation which fell on the Church. If one pope and his papal court were a financial burden to Europe at the best of times, it was doubly a burden to have to support two. Each of the popes busied himself in declaring the other to be anti-Christ, and Europe felt that they were in all probability both right.

Thus when seventy years of "Babylonish captivity" (such was the name given to the period during which the popes lived at Avignon) had ended, only to give place to the "Great Schism" and the scandal of two popes at once, it was certain that there would be many led to criticize and condemn the papacy altogether; of this critical spirit Wyclif is the type.

Wyclif was a Yorkshireman who had gone to Oxford, where he had become master of Balliol College. He looked at matters from a historical point of view. The faults of the Church, he said, came in the main from its pursuit of wealth and Wyclif. power on earth; if it had remained true to the poverty and simplicity of the apostles none of the abuses would have occurred. Thus he found nothing in the Bible to justify the payments made to the Pope, called annates and firstfruits, or to excuse the holding of more than one benefice at once (pluralities), or to defend the easy and careless lives which were led alike by many churchmen and many friars. These opinions were popular. Wyclif was employed to draw up an answer disputing the Pope's demands for money, and he was used by John of Gaunt in his

political schemes. The end of Edward III's reign saw everything going awry: failure in France, corruption and jobbery at home, heavy taxes and great want. The Black Prince lay dying, and his brother, John of Gaunt, was the next most important person in the kingdom. He gained a sort of popularity by abusing the Government and promising reforms. He strove to turn out the clerical party, headed by William of Wykeham, who held all the chief posts. For a time he succeeded, but his government proved worse than the one it replaced.

In 1376 the clerics rallied under the leadership of the Black Prince, and the "Good Parliament" seriously tried to mend things. Two of John of Gaunt's friends were impeached and dismissed, and some of the lesser rogues punished. But the work of the Good Parliament fell when the Black Prince died. No man ever had a more bitter end. The greatest general of the age, the type of chivalry, respected and loved by all who knew him, he saw all going wrong, and was himself powerless to set it right. Broken down by a long and painful sickness, he died; his father, grown senile and decrepit, soon followed him to the grave. So faded the glory of the later Plantagenets.

Wyclif proved a ready weapon in John of Gaunt's hand, and John of Gaunt sheltered him from the rage of the clerical party.

When Wyclif was summoned to St. Paul's to be tried for <sup>1377.</sup> what he had written, the Duke stood beside him to defend him; when Courtenay, Bishop of London, declared that Wyclif was little better than a heretic, the Duke threatened to drag Courtenay from the church by the hair of his head. A riot began; the citizens of London rushed in to defend their bishop; and Wyclif nearly lost his life. Brawling and abuse would not mend matters. Wyclif himself took no part in it. Indeed he had no sympathy with John of Gaunt, but as a scholar and reformer he tried to spread his ideas by practical means. He founded an order of preachers, "the Poor Priests", to teach his ideas among the people. He also directly appealed to the people himself by his tracts, which he wrote, not in Latin, the language hitherto used for all religious discussion, but in homely, plain, forcible English, which all could understand. We



shall find Luther also discarding the priestly Latin in favour of his native German when he too begins his quarrel with the Roman Church. Finally, Wyclif anticipated Luther by causing the whole Bible to be translated from the Latin into English, so that it should no longer be the property of scholars, but open to all to read for themselves, or aloud to their friends who were too ignorant to read. Translation of the Bible.

Some of this work might seem offensive at Rome, but it was applauded in England. Wyclif, however, could not rest here. From attacking the practice of the churchmen, he went on to search deeper. His teaching, in his phrase, "Dominion is founded on grace", was taken to mean that it was lawful to withdraw obedience from those who were sinful, and especially from the unworthy popes; and when he went still further and attacked the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, he began to lose the support that had hitherto been given him. John of Gaunt hurried to Oxford to bid him be silent. The University itself, till then proud of him, found itself forced to abandon him. The party of the friars, backed by the king and Archbishop Courtenay, and aided by the Pope, proved too strong. Wyclif had to leave Oxford; but even so, though his opinions were declared heretical, his enemies dared not make him a martyr. He died peacefully in his parish at Lutterworth. Wyclif's "heretical" opinions.

Part of Wyclif's work was before its time. The bulk of Englishmen agreed to blame the wealth and neglect of some churchmen, but they had no mind to cast off the Church. A reform in the government of the church was popular: a change in doctrine was not. We shall see even in Henry VIII's day how slowly and unwillingly England changed its belief. Victory of the clerical party.

Yet as a teacher and a reformer Wyclif found many followers. Everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him, and in the distress following the Peasant Revolt and King Richard's minority, these were many. It was said that if you saw five men talking together three of them were Lollards. Not all the Lollards held Wyclif's heretical opinions, but they were enough to rouse the Church to Persecution of the Lollards.

action. Richard himself was no friend of the Lollards. He bade his officers help the Bishops: he ordered Wyclif's works to be destroyed: he issued an ordinance against the "Poor Priests": and on the tomb prepared for him he placed the words "he overthrew the heretics and laid their friends low". Still more vigorous was Henry IV. He won the throne by the aid of the Church, and especially of Archbishop Arundel, and he rewarded his Church supporters by a persecution of Lollards. In 1401 Parliament prepared the Statute "De Haeretico Comburendo", but before it was law William Sawtré was burnt. A few others followed. There were not however many martyrs. More Lollards were ready to abjure than to suffer.

Yet in spite of the persecution the Lollards were still numerous enough to threaten a rebellion in Henry V's reign. The leader was Sir John Oldcastle, in right of his wife Lord Cobham, a soldier who had fought well in Henry IV's wars against the Welsh. In consequence of his Lollard opinions he was arrested and sentenced to be burnt, but he escaped. A plot was formed for a great mass of Lollards to meet in St. Giles's fields, and to seize the king. The plot was discovered, and the king, by closing the gates of London and sending a body of horse to the meeting-place, prevented an outbreak. Oldcastle was at last recaptured, and burnt as a heretic. After this we hear little more of the Lollards, although in a few villages Lollardry lingered on till the time of the Reformation.

The movement was on the whole a failure, because the Lollards had nothing definite to propose. They were united in complaining about the wealth and luxury of great churchmen, but in little else. Some followed Wyclif's later opinions, and became actually heretics: that is to say, they denied some of the teachings of the Church, and wanted a change in doctrine. But the people at large had not the least wish for this; they regarded it as going much too far. In two points, however, Wyclif's life is memorable. To him and his followers we owe our first complete Bible in English, and he also taught the right of all, clergy and laity alike, to form their ideas of conduct on what they found in the Bible, without being obliged to follow blindly what they were told to believe.

## XX. Lancaster and York

## I. Outlines

The Wars of the Roses were a series of struggles for the Crown between the descendants of Edward III. The Lancastrian kings were descended from the third son, John of Gaunt. The Yorkists drew their claim from a union of the line of the second and fourth sons, Lionel of Clarence and Edward of York. The wars ended with the marriage of the heiress of the Yorkists with a remote descendant of John of Gaunt, Henry Tudor. Looked at in this light the Wars of the Roses begin with the first battle of St. Albans in 1455, when Richard Duke of York defeated Henry VI, and end with the battle of Bosworth in 1485, where Richard III was left dead on the field, and Henry VII reigned in his stead. This is a period of thirty years.

Outlines:  
the struggle  
between  
Lancaster  
and York.

Yet, though these thirty years cover the most acute phase of the struggle, if we look into it more closely, they are, after all, only a part of the tragedy, the third act in which the plot ripens into catastrophe. The beginnings of the tragedy lie much farther back. The action develops slowly; foreshadows what is going to happen; is suspended for a time by other circumstances; and only finally reaches its climax in 1455. Yet the climax was no surprise: on the contrary, it was inevitable and obvious.

History accustoms us to think that the trouble was due to the ambition of the House of York which made an unjustifiable attack upon the Lancastrian Henry VI. We are apt to forget that the Yorkists were only following the example which the Lancastrians had set. Henry of Bolingbroke had rebelled against his cousin Richard II, had seized his throne, and had made away with him. He was astute enough to cloke his violence by a show of care for the constitution. Richard was deposed as a tyrant: Henry IV accepted the throne as being the choice of Parliament. All this bears a legal look, but we must remember that Parliament

The roots of  
the trouble:  
the usurper,  
Henry IV.



in those days had little strength of its own. It had been swayed one way by the Black Prince, another by John of Gaunt. It had been "Merciless" for Thomas of Woodstock and servile to Richard II. Being rather a weapon in the hands of the strong than a force in itself, Henry IV wielded it to hew down his cousin. He was too powerful and successful to be openly called a traitor. His treason had prospered—"For when it prospers folks don't call it treason"—yet none the less the plain fact was that the Lancastrian had usurped the throne from the Plantagenet. Even when Richard II was dead, the next heir was not Lancaster, but March, the descendant of the second son Clarence. In the view of constitutional historians the throne of England is not hereditary but elective. Doubtless Parliament, like Joseph, could set Ephraim before Manasseh, could prefer Lancaster to March. None the less the people were apt to murmur, and talk of birthright.

If we take this view, the Wars of the Roses are seen on a wider scale. We shall include the struggle which Henry IV fought with the allied forces of the houses of Percy, Mortimer, and Glendower. The battle-fields of Shrewsbury, and Bramham Moor are of the same character as St. Albans and Bloreheath. We may go farther back, and find the beginning of the series at Radcot Bridge in Richard II's reign, where Gloucester, Henry of Lancaster, and the "Appellants" were too strong for the King; and following the same plan we shall find the last at Stoke, where the Crown proved too strong for Simnel and his Yorkist friends. The date of the former is 1386, of the latter 1487. Here then is another "Hundred Years' War" waged at home instead of France, resembling its more famous namesake in having long periods of quiescence mingled with its periods of eruption, yet throughout bearing a constant character; and its goal a throne. Only instead of national ambition aiming at the throne of France, we have family ambition aiming at the throne of England.

We have already observed in the time of King Stephen in England, and after the death of Alexander III in Scotland, the troubles which came when there was a disputed succession

The Wars of the Roses on a wider scale. Radcot Bridge, 1386, till Stoke, 1487.

The Hundred Years' Civil War.

owing to the lack of direct royal descendants. The Wars of the Roses sprang from a cause similar, yet different—a succession disputed among too many royal descendants. A king might have no sons: he might on the other hand have too many: either fate might prove a curse to the country. The first indeed was a curse absolute; trouble was inevitable. The second only a curse contingent; whether trouble came of it or not would depend on what became of the superabundance of children. Still, the danger was always there: we have seen how the younger Henry, Geoffrey, Richard, and John poisoned Henry II's later days by their quarrels with him and each other, after he had attempted to give them each dominions of their own. Fortunately only two of them survived him.

Disputed  
succession:  
no heir.

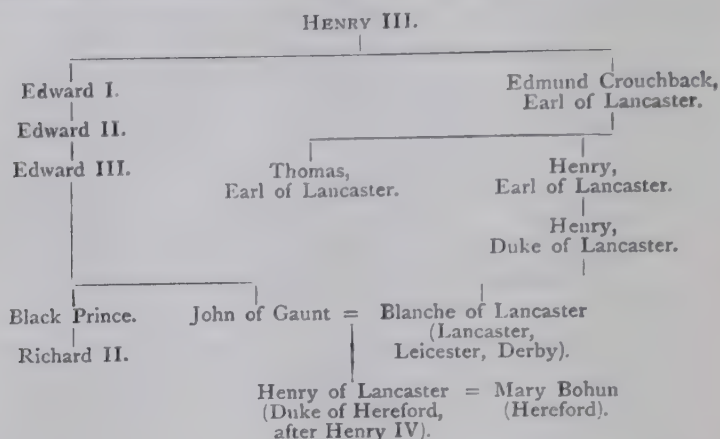
A large family confronted a king with the task of settling his children in marriage. To marry off a number of sons to foreign princesses and so extend alliances was no doubt the ideal course, but it was not always easy to find matches for them. To marry off daughters to foreign princes was equally satisfactory, but it was always expensive: dowries had to be provided. On the contrary, to marry daughters and sons at home to nobles and noble heiresses was easy. Most noble families were glad of such royal alliances, even if the dowry were small. The policy was cheap—and bad. It was a simple way into a difficulty. It converted the noble families into semi-royal families; it was sowing a crop of royal cousins who, living in England, and being in possession of great estates, were certain to become embarrassing to the Crown. For example, grandchildren of Edward I were connected with the houses of Despenser (Gloucester), de Burgh, Courtenay, Bohun, Segrave, and Holland; and grandchildren of Edward III were allied with the houses of Mortimer, Holland, Despenser, Bohun, and Neville.

Too many  
claimants.  
The semi-  
royal  
families.

The policy of bestowing great earldoms on royal princes, which was begun by Henry III, and continued by Edward I and Edward III, finds its best illustration in the position of John of Gaunt, and his son Henry of Lancaster. John of Gaunt was Edward III's third son. He

John of Gaunt,  
Duke of Lancaster.

married Blanche of Lancaster, who, being herself of royal blood,<sup>1</sup>



brought him the possessions of Lancaster, and the earldoms of Derby and Leicester. The son of this match, Henry, married Mary Bohun, and gained half the possessions of Hereford. Thus

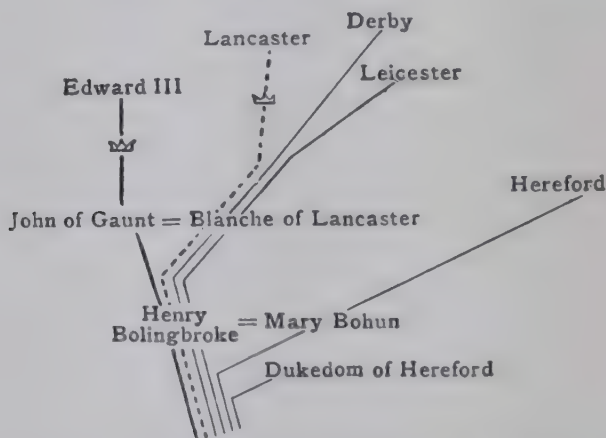


Diagram to illustrate Henry of Bolingbroke's Power: "royal" on both sides, possessor of, or heir to, two Dukedoms and three Earldoms

we see how formidable this Henry was to his cousin Richard II. Besides being of royal blood on both sides of his house, he was master of four great earldoms. Richard had made him Duke of Hereford even while his father, the Duke of Lancaster, was still alive.

<sup>1</sup> She was Henry III's great-great-granddaughter.



## 2. The First Act of the Tragedy: The Overthrow of the Legitimate Line by the House of Lancaster

The story of the reign of Richard II is the story of a prolonged struggle between the party of the king and the party of Lancaster. At first, John of Gaunt was master of England; but the Peasant Revolt seems to have terrified him. He realized that he was bitterly hated. After 1381 he retired from taking an active share in politics, and from 1386 till 1389 was busy in pushing a claim to the throne of Castile. He left, however, his policy to his son Henry (then Earl of Derby), who, with Thomas of Gloucester<sup>1</sup> and the Earls of Warwick, Nottingham, and Arundel, continued to harass King Richard. They acted through Parliament, urging on that body to try to check the king's spending of money by demanding a commission to regulate the royal household. Parliament was ready enough to comply, since taxation had been notoriously heavy, a fresh poll tax had been levied, and much money was being spent and no account of it given. The quarrel came to a head in 1386, when Parliament demanded that Richard's friends—de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and de Vere, Earl of Oxford—should be dismissed. De la Pole received his dismissal, but de Vere and the king's friends took up arms: however, in the battle of Radcot Bridge de Vere was defeated, and Richard had to give way. The methods of the Wars of the Roses were foreshadowed when Gloucester, Derby, Warwick, Nottingham, and Arundel, styling themselves the "Appellants", accused of treason the king's fallen friends. All save one were condemned to death by the Parliament which won for itself the name of "Merciless", and five were beheaded.

**Triumph of the Appellants over the king's friends at Radcot Bridge, 1386.**

The remainder of the reign saw Richard striving to work out his revenge on the Appellants. In 1389 he declared to Gloucester that he was of age enough to manage his own kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Richard II's youngest uncle.

For eight years he ruled quietly; but in 1397 he caused Gloucester, Warwick, and Arundel to be seized on a charge of treason. Parliament, overawed by a body of Cheshire archers standing armed in Westminster Palace Yard, declared them guilty. Gloucester died or was murdered in prison, Warwick imprisoned, Arundel executed, and Arundel's brother the Archbishop banished.

Thus three of the five Appellants were disposed of. Derby and Nottingham remained, and for the time the king's face shone on them. They were even made dukes. Richard's position seemed to be secure, for he had extorted from Parliament a revenue for life, and had even forced that body to delegate its powers to a council of eighteen of his friends. This made Richard an absolute king. There was no reason why he should ever summon another Parliament.

Then came another change. The two new-made dukes quarrelled. Richard banished them both—Norfolk for life, Hereford for seven years,<sup>1</sup> promising the latter not to forfeit any lands or goods which might come to him during his exile. This promise he did not keep; for, needing money to equip an expedition to Ireland, he seized the Lancaster estates when Gaunt died in 1399, and, reckless of the danger, went off to Ireland. During his absence Henry Bolingbroke landed in Yorkshire, alleging that he had come to claim the king's promise and recover the Lancaster possessions. Percy of Northumberland and all Richard's enemies joined him. Richard came back only to find his cousin supreme. The claim to the dukedom of Lancaster was enlarged to a claim to the throne. Richard was formally deposed by Parliament, and Henry IV became king.

The king's  
revenge on  
Gloucester,  
Warwick,  
and Arundel.

Banishment  
of the other  
Appellants  
Hereford and  
Norfolk.

Return of  
Hereford and  
overthrow of  
King Richard.

<sup>1</sup> The change in titles of these persons is bewildering. Thomas Mowbray was Earl of Nottingham, and afterwards Duke of Norfolk. Henry of Bolingbroke (son of John of Gaunt) was Earl of Derby, then Duke of Hereford, then, on his father's death, Duke of Lancaster, and, lastly, Henry IV.

### 3. The Percy-Mortimer Alliance against the House of Lancaster

The accession of Henry IV is usually dwelt on as a landmark in our constitutional history. It is held to display again the fact that the throne of England is not hereditary but elective. It is argued that Richard II by his misgovernment had forfeited the throne; his declarations—or those that his enemies put in his mouth—that the law of England resided in his own breast, and that he alone could frame it, and that the life and lands of all his lieges lay at the mercy of his royal will, were certainly unconstitutional: accordingly his cousin, a better man than he, is put in his place. In this view Henry IV is found in a class with Alfred, Harold, William III, George I, and we may perhaps add Cromwell, the “chosen of the people”; while Richard II may be classed with Edward II, Charles I, James II, the “rejected of the people”. But though it is important to remember that Henry IV’s title was mainly Parliamentary, and that as a consequence Parliament during his reign was petted and encouraged to be precociously active beyond its real powers—in its way a turning-point in our history—yet from the point of view which we are at present taking, the accession of the Lancastrian Henry IV was merely an event long foreshadowed, only the successful ending of a long plot, only the first revolution in the constantly turning wheel of the succession. In short, it was the triumph of the Lancastrians in the party struggle. And this struggle was not merely for good government. No attempt was made to reform Richard, or to make him rule well. The prize was the Crown, and the winner took it. But the victory of this Lancastrian—who was so ardent a supporter of the constitution that he had to depose his royal cousin, and later to procure his death, all doubtless in the cause of good government—in no way altered or ended the bitterness of the party struggle. That went on as before.

The accession of Henry IV a constitutional landmark.

But also a victory of family ambition.

This fact is at once plain when we recollect that from 1399 to 1407 Henry IV was never free from rebellion. The first rising



was planned by Richard II's half-brothers, the Hollands, Earls of Kent and Huntingdon, who plotted to seize Henry as he was keeping Christmas at Windsor and liberate Richard II from Pontefract. Henry got news of their design, and fled to London. The plotters scattered to raise their retainers, but were all captured. No trial was given them; all were beheaded: and, to prevent any further rebellions with the same object, Henry caused Richard's dead body to be brought to London and displayed there. A death, in its date so extremely convenient to King Henry, could hardly be accepted as natural: the report of the chronicler that Richard was so "vexed at heart over the loss of his friends that he neither ate nor drank from that hour, and thus, as they say, it came to pass that he died" is unconvincing. Doubtless he was murdered.

Thus fell Richard II and the party of the "White Hart", but his death did not make Henry IV the nearest heir to the throne.

That right belonged to the house of Mortimer,<sup>1</sup> and accordingly we find a Mortimer deeply concerned in the next plot: and it is scarcely surprising that it should begin in Cheshire and the North Welsh border, which had been Richard II's stronghold.

Owen Glendower, a Welsh landowner, had quarrelled with his neighbour, and, as was typical of the disordered time, each tried to make good his claims by force, to settle by arms what would now be settled by law. The fighting spread into a national rising. Henry himself led an army into North Wales, and, as usual, could do nothing against Welsh mountains and Welsh weather. He withdrew, and left the task of repelling Glendower to Henry Percy (Hotspur) and Sir Edmund Mortimer. Mortimer tried to surprise his enemy, but his force was cut to pieces and himself made prisoner.

Now, though this Edmund Mortimer was not the Mortimer next to the succession, he was closely related to him. He was uncle to Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, the lineal heir to the Crown. He was, moreover, brother-in-law to Henry Percy, who had married Elizabeth Mortimer. Consequently the Percies

<sup>1</sup> See table on p. 214.

began to urge the king to ransom Mortimer, and the king had no mind to comply: he did not wish to help the Welsh with money; he thought it well to have Mortimer safely shut up and out of the way; and he had no pity for the prisoner, since tales were going round that he had got himself captured on purpose, and that he was treasonably friendly to Glendower.

Thus the Percies and the king grew estranged, all the more that, while Henry's campaign against the Welsh had proved a dolorous failure, the Percies had won a brilliant success against the Scots. Hotspur had defeated 10,000 Scots under Douglas and Murdoch Stewart at Homildon Hill; the old supremacy of the archers had been illustrated again; many prisoners had been taken, including both Scottish leaders. This was, indeed, a windfall. The Percies were an extremely powerful family, and an extremely greedy one. Mattathias, Earl of Northumberland, the father, Henry Hotspur, the son, and Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, the brother, held between them most of the chief offices in England. The list is too long to recite here. Suddenly their hopes of making a large profit by ransoming their prisoners were dashed by a royal command that they were not to part with them. They had already been pressing the king to pay the debts which they alleged that he owed, and to ransom their kinsman Mortimer: now, provoked beyond bearing by his attempts to wrest from them what they regarded as the due reward of their valour, they rebelled.

Quarrel with  
the Percies,  
who join the  
Mortimer cause.

Homildon  
Hill, 1402.

The result was the formation of a grand alliance against Henry. The Percies headed it; their prisoner, the Earl of Douglas, brought in the Scots; Mortimer and Owen Glendower, of course, joined against the common enemy; the alliance was cemented, as usual, by a marriage. Mortimer wedded Owen's daughter. Their purpose was thus stated by Mortimer, "to restore to King Richard the crown if he be alive; and if not, my honoured nephew who is right heir to the crown of England".

The issue was fought out at Shrewsbury, the sternest battle seen in England since the days of Hastings. Some seven thousand men fell; Hotspur was killed making a last desperate charge. Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, was beheaded two

days later. Henry triumphed; the conspiracy was shattered; the Earl of Northumberland submitted to the king, and Henry treated him with more generosity than he deserved. He remembered his old friendship, and forgot his treason: in six months he set "his trusty Mattathias" free, and gave back his lands. The "trusty

**Battle of Shrewsbury, 1403. Victory of the king.**

**Renewed plots by Northumberland, Mowbray, and Scrope, 1405.**

Mattathias" made an ill use of this clemency. In 1405 he embarked on another conspiracy with Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, and Scrope, Archbishop of York. Eight thousand men gathered in Yorkshire, and Scrope put forth a series of accusations against the king, holding him guilty of winning the Crown by treachery, conniving at Richard's murder, putting men to death without trial, and ruining his subjects by illegal taxation. There was enough truth in these charges to make them intolerable, even if Scrope and his comrades were not actually plotting to dethrone Henry. The rebels dispersed on the belief that the leaders on both sides had come to terms. Nottingham and the Archbishop were seized and beheaded. To put an Archbishop to death for treason was a strong step. Men darkly hinted that Henry's subsequent illness was but the judgment of heaven on his impiety.

Once again the prime mover, the "trusty" Earl, escaped. He had been too prudent to be at Shrewsbury, and too cautious

**Battle of Bramham Moor. Death of Northumberland, 1408.**

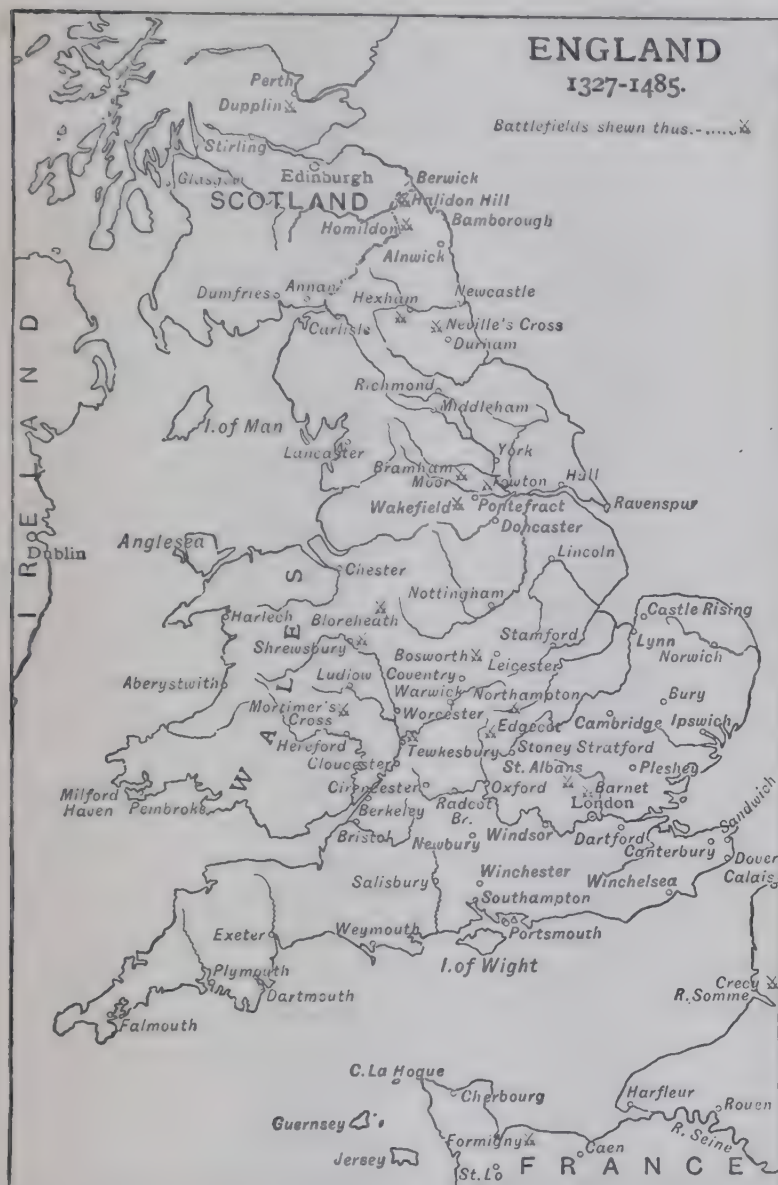
to venture, like Scrope, into the enemy's clutches. For a time he made the round of Henry's foes, visiting Scotland, Wales, Flanders, and France. At length he threw away prudence, and tried one more stroke in Yorkshire. Sir Thomas Rokeby, with the local levies, met him at Bramham Moor. His force was routed, and he was killed on the field. And with this fight Henry's troubles came practically to an end.

So the first act in the drama of Lancaster and York—the Hundred Years' Civil War—occupied the reign of Richard II.

**Victory of the house of Lancaster over the Percy-Mortimer alliance.**

It ended with the overthrow of the eldest line by the line of Lancaster. The second act ended at Bramham Moor: it displays a struggle against the usurping Lancastrian carried on by an ambitious family which made a catspaw of the Mortimer title; and





it closed with the triumph of the Lancastrian. But it is impossible not to recognize the true features of the Wars of the Roses proper, revealed in this reign. We have rebellion, treachery, murder, beheading without

Features of the Wars of the Roses.

trial; we have the great northern house of Percy, playing the part afterwards played by the great northern house of Neville, first raising a king to power, then trying to control him, and finally destroying itself in the attempt to overthrow him. And, most significant of all, we have the ready appeal to arms in order to back a quarrel: we have "livery" and the "retainer".

The "retainer" is sometimes described as being "feudal". This, strictly speaking, he was not. The essence of feudalism is

The "retainer". the giving of service on condition of holding land. The retainer was bound to his lord, not by tenure of land, but by wages. He was not born a retainer; he chose to become one. He accepted service at his master's hands, and wore his badge, his "livery". Retainers were, in fact, the substitute for a regular army. When a king wished to go to war he employed his nobles to bring men into the field: in old days they brought their feudal tenants: when feudalism decayed they brought their retainers. Unfortunately these men, who proved a blessing at Crécy and Agincourt, were a curse at home. "Retained" by their masters after the war was over, they were employed in time of peace to pursue private quarrels at home, to overawe local tribunals, to terrify juries, to rob the barns and stables of an opponent, and even to defy the king. The disaster to the country lay in this, that the fighting power of the age rested neither in the class which formed the bulk of the nation, nor in the central government which had the interest of the nation at heart, but in the hands of a selfish class of nobles who cared for nothing but themselves. The days were not far off when a struggle on the part of the "Bear with the Ragged Staff" against the "Portcullis"<sup>1</sup> would not be a harmless Æsop-like affair with a moral at the end, but a stern strife, convulsing a kingdom.

<sup>1</sup>The badges of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. The "Portcullis" was afterwards borne by Henry VII, and is displayed all over King's College Chapel.

#### 4. The Third Act of the Tragedy: The Wars of the Roses

Between Bramham Moor in 1408 and the first battle of St. Albans in 1455 there was no actual outbreak of civil war. Yet the fire was smothered and not quenched—  
 down below the surface the embers of discontent with the house of Lancaster were still glowing.

Smothered fires.  
 Richard of Cambridge's plot,  
 1415.

On the eve of sailing for his campaign of Agincourt, Henry V found out a conspiracy against him. The chief plotters, Richard of Cambridge, and Lord Scrope and Sir Thomas Grey, paid forfeit with their lives. Their mere names, however, tell us a good deal. Scrope was a relative of the archbishop whom Henry IV had beheaded; Richard of Cambridge was even more notorious, being a son of Edmund, Duke of York, and the husband of Anne Mortimer, the heiress of the line of Clarence and Mortimer.<sup>1</sup> Thus he represented the legitimate line against the usurping Lancastrian. He died on the scaffold and left his claims to his son. We shall hear much of this son. He is that Richard, Duke of York, who was to win St. Albans and to die at Wakefield.

For the time the nation was too much occupied with the successes of the French war to care about events at home. Herein lay at once the strength and the weakness of Henry V as a statesman. He was a strong  
 and popular king, coming, as it seemed, a gift from heaven at the hour of need. Yet his policy only postponed the evils of the time: it did not cure them. Henry looked backward, and not forward. He returned to the methods of Edward III, French war: the true cure lay in the methods afterwards employed by Henry VII. Henry V did not remedy the evils of feudalism; he only cloaked them over. Instead of destroying the retainers and curbing the nobles, he employed them against a foreign enemy. Employing them only meant increasing their dangerous fighting power. He neglected his opportunity, and

Distraction of  
 the French war.

<sup>1</sup> See table, p. 214.



Henry VI paid for the neglect. The father sowed the wind and the son reaped the whirlwind.

Until the appearance of the Maid of Orleans in 1428 the system of Henry V went on with scarcely a check: even till the French terms were foolishly rejected at Arras, and Burgundy fell away from the English alliance, the English cause was fairly prosperous.

1428. Failure  
abroad breeds dis-  
content at home.

Then came eighteen years of disaster with the usual result. All political parties are ready to take credit: none will admit failure. The steady round of taxes and lost battles, and more taxes and more lost battles, speedily destroyed the reputation of the Government. Had Parliament been an effective body, the unsatisfactory ministers would have been ejected from power in a peaceable manner. But in the fifteenth century Parliament was not effective. It could complain querulously, but it could not act. The only way to overthrow those in power at the court was by intrigue, or, still worse, by rebellion.

For the first twenty-five years of his reign Henry VI was chiefly guided by his uncles, and his cousins the Beauforts.

The Beauforts.

John, Duke of Bedford, was a wise and patriotic statesman, but the care of French affairs gave him no time to mend matters in England. This left the field clear to his brother, Gloucester—that “fair brother Humphrey” whom we have seen Henry V distrust. Gloucester was greedy and self-seeking, and involved himself in bitter quarrels with the Beauforts. This Beaufort family was descended from John of Gaunt’s illegitimate marriage with Catharine Swinford.<sup>1</sup> One of them, Henry Beaufort, became Bishop of Winchester and Cardinal: others held, in succession, the title of Earl and afterwards Duke, of Somerset. All were Lancastrian, as, indeed, was Humphrey of Gloucester, but the two parties were bitterly hostile, struggling for power in the Council of Regency; so far, there was no serious Yorkist party to cause the Lancastrian factions to unite.

In 1445 Henry married his French wife, Margaret of Anjou. In 1447 Gloucester was imprisoned on a charge of treason, and died in prison; no doubt he was murdered. Since Henry VI

<sup>1</sup> See table, p. 211.

## “THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND BEAUFORT”

EDWARD III.

Blanche of Lancaster = John of Gaunt = Catharine Swynford.

Henry IV.

Henry V.  
Henry VI.

John,  
Duke of  
Bedford.

Humphrey,  
Duke of  
Gloucester.

John Beaufort,  
Earl of Somerset.

Henry (Cardinal)  
Beaufort.

John,  
Duke of Somerset.

Edmund,  
Duke of Somerset,  
killed at  
St. Albans, 1455.

Edmund Tudor = Margaret.

Henry VII.

Henry,  
Duke of Somerset,  
executed after  
Hexham, 1464.

Edmund,  
Duke of Somerset,  
executed after  
Tewkesbury, 1471.

John,  
killed at  
Tewkesbury,  
1471.

had as yet no son, Richard, Duke of York, son of Richard of Cambridge, became heir to the throne. So far, York had shown no sign of disloyalty. For more than ten years he had held a command in France, and had made a reputation as a stout soldier. The Beauforts, however, grew jealous of him. He was removed from his command, and sent into practical banishment as King's Lieutenant in Ireland. Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, superseded him in Normandy (1448).

Marriage of  
Henry VI, 1445.  
York, heir to  
the throne.

Then came the hour of the last agony in France. The patched-up truce was foolishly broken. One defeat followed another: failure abroad was visited on the heads of unpopular ministers at home by a series of murders. In 1450 the Bishop of Chichester was murdered. Suffolk, who had had the moral courage to negotiate the peace with France—the one possible course a wise man could take—was banished, intercepted on his way, and his head hewn off, with a rusty sword for axe and a boat's gunwale for block. In June Jack Cade, pretending that his name was Mortimer, led the Kentish men in rebellion, and occupied London, murdering, there, the Bishop of Salisbury and Lord Saye, the Treasurer. The idea that York was at the bottom of Cade's rebellion was fostered when he came back suddenly from Ireland just as Somerset returned from Nor-

Cade's insurrection.

mandy. A Yorkist party grew in strength, posing as the friends of good government, and the opponents of the Beauforts and the Court party. York himself behaved with what may, considering the spirit of his time, be called moderation. He did indeed collect an army in 1452, but he did not fight. When, in 1453, a son was born to Henry VI, thus displacing him from being heir to the Crown, he gave his allegiance to the new prince. In the next year, when King Henry went mad and York was chosen regent, he made no attempt to seize the throne. It was not till the king's recovery brought with it the return to power of his deadly enemy, Somerset, that York actually took the field. He could not do anything else; had he submitted, his fate would probably have been the block.

The Wars of the Roses proper, beginning in 1455, fall into four subdivisions. The first was a struggle for the regency, and ended in the triumph of York over Somerset at St. Albans. The second period began in 1459 with the attempt of Queen Margaret to overthrow the Yorkists, and ended with the accession of Edward IV, the Yorkist triumph at Towton (1461), and the beating down of the Lancastrian resistance in the north. The third was marked by the effort of the Nevilles to master the line of York: this failed at Barnet and Tewkesbury (1471). The last relates how Richard III, having alienated a great part of his own supporters, fell victim to an alliance of enemies at Bosworth (1485).

### § 1. *York against Somerset*

The first campaign is simple and may be speedily dismissed. It was not so much York against Lancaster as York against Somerset. The object was not yet to seize the Crown: it was a struggle for the regency—the reins of power but not the name. York's army, moving on London, found the king's forces holding St. Albans. An attack was made on the little town. The deciding point in the fight came when Warwick and his men, making their way through the houses in St. Peter's Street, burst into the

I. York against  
Somerset.  
Battle of St.  
Albans, 1455.



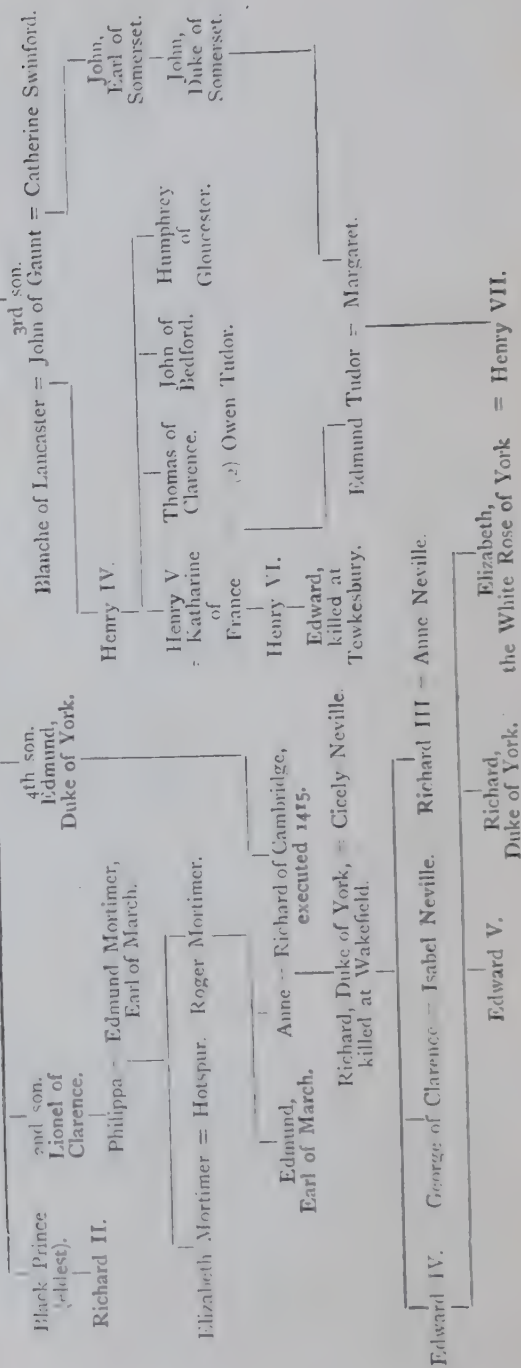
middle of the Lancastrians. Somerset was killed and King Henry captured. As the fruit of victory York again became Protector, and filled the great offices of State with his friends. Somerset being dead, all the blame could conveniently be put on him, and as the Yorkists were profuse in promises of better government, it might be hoped that the country would settle down.

Henry VI, gentle and pious like another Job—a simple, upright man, fearing the Lord above all, and avoiding evil—would never have provoked further trouble. But his queen, Margaret of Anjou, was fierce as her husband Margaret of Anjou. was meek. In spirit, resource, courage, resolution, and in the bad side of these qualities, ambition, guile, ferocity, mercilessness, the “she-wolf of France” was a match for any baron of the time. There was nothing of the softer sex about her. In an age full of treason and brutality Margaret was treacherous and ruthless above the rest. To cast discredit on the Yorkist lords she did not scruple to invite French marauders into England: she even advised them where they might land, sack, burn, and kill without fear of resistance. While Henry could not bear to look on the quartered remains of a traitor, perched on Cripplegate, saying, “I will not that any Christian man be so cruelly used for me”, Margaret would have agreed with Louis XI’s maxim that there was “no perfume to match the scent of a dead traitor”. After the second battle of St. Albans she bade her son Edward, then eight years old, choose what death two Yorkist prisoners should die. The boy’s answer, “Let their heads be taken off”, must have delighted his mother.

As Margaret was the mainstay of the Lancastrians, so were the Nevilles of the Yorkist side. At first sight two things are perhaps surprising about these Nevilles. To begin The Nevilles. with, the grandfather of Neville the Kingmaker, Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, was a Lancastrian; and so was his second wife, Joan Beaufort, the Kingmaker’s grandmother, being a daughter of John of Gaunt. Thus the Nevilles were of that large and dangerous class, royal cousins; but we should scarce expect to find them on the Yorkist side. Secondly, since Richard Neville, the Kingmaker’s father, was indeed only the

## EDWARD III's DESCENDANTS

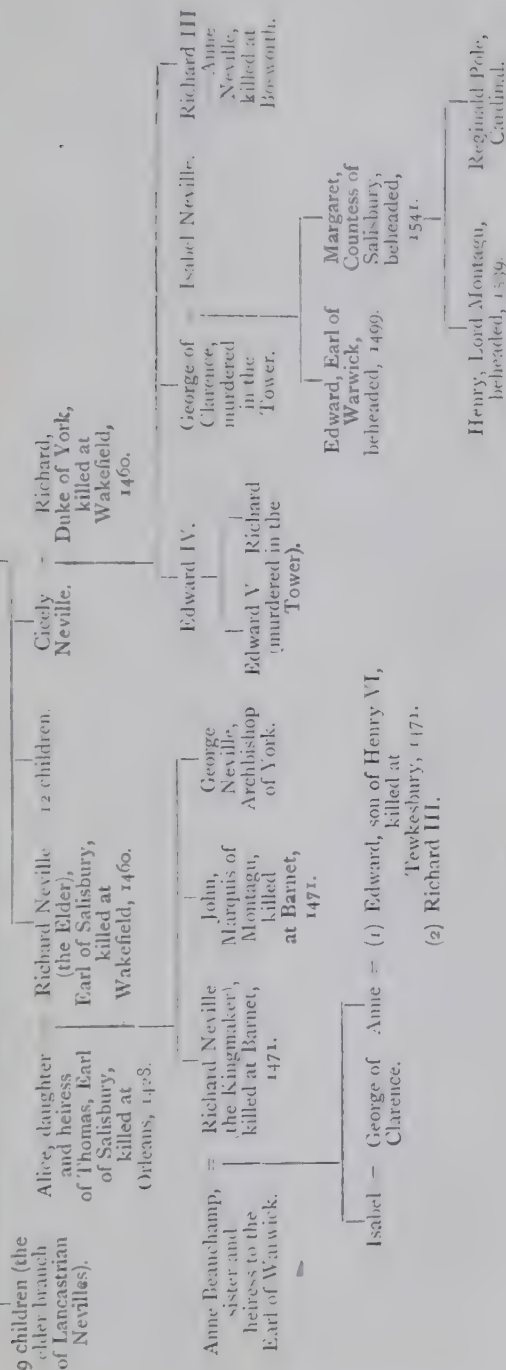
## EDWARD III.



## TABLE OF THE NEVILLE FAMILY

Observe the violent deaths, and especially the misfortunes of the Clarence descendants

Margaret Stafford (1) = RALPH NEVILLE, = (2) Joan Beaufort,  
Earl of Westmoreland. daughter of  
John of Gaunt.





elder son of a *second* family, and there were nine children in the first family, it does not seem likely that he will inherit wide estates. The answer which explains both the sympathies and the power of the Nevilles can be given in two words—fortunate marriages.

Ralph Neville and Joan Beaufort had fourteen children:<sup>1</sup> no inconsiderable number to add to the nine in the first family. It was hardly likely that there would be much love lost between the elder and younger branches, or that the younger branch would be rich in this world's goods. Ralph, the father of this multitude, did the best he could for them. He left to his widow his Yorkshire lands, and she in her turn took care that they should pass to her eldest son, Richard, thus depriving the elder branch of what they considered their rights. But better than this, both parents had a genius for match-making. Two marriages only need be dwelt upon. Richard, the eldest son in the second family, married Alice Montacute, heiress of the Earl of Salisbury; the youngest daughter, Cicely, married Richard Duke of York. Here is the beginning of the fortunes of the younger Nevilles: here is the explanation why they take the Yorkist side, all the more eagerly since the first family with whom they had quarrelled was Lancastrian.

The Earl of Salisbury was killed at the siege of Orleans, and Richard Neville, in right of his wife, became Earl of Salisbury, and added the Montacute lands to his own Yorkshire inheritance. He too was father to four sons and five daughters, a large family, though nothing compared with Ralph's. But again the marriage policy was pursued with striking success. The eldest son, named like his father, Richard, married Anne, daughter of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. The marriage seemed scarcely likely to lead to anything more than a dowry, for the heir to the Earldom, Henry Beauchamp, was young and newly married.<sup>2</sup> But fate seemed bent on favouring the name of Richard Neville. Beauchamp died, leaving only an infant daughter; and the

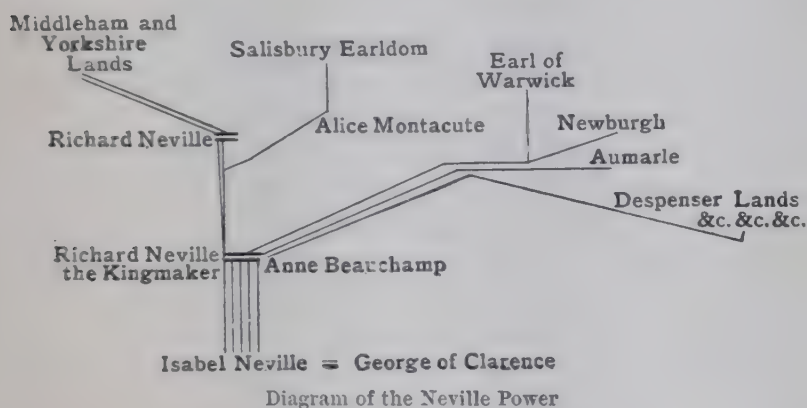
Fortunate marriages.

The Beauchamp marriage.

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Neville was well blessed with "olive branches round about his table". A student of the Psalms will remember the words with which the next Psalm begins—*Sacpe expugnauerunt.*

<sup>2</sup> To a Neville: Cicely, sister of the Kingmaker.

daughter died; and thus Richard Neville the younger became, in right of his wife, "Earl of Warwick, Newburgh, and Aumarle, Premier Earl of England, Baron of Stanley and Hanslape, Lord of Glamorgan and Morgannoc", master of the Despenser lands in South Wales, the Beauchamp lands in Gloucestershire, Warwick, Oxfordshire and Buckingham, with scattered holdings in seventeen other counties all over the length and breadth of England. More than a hundred and fifty manors were his. By this amazing stroke of luck, the boy of twenty-two became far more powerful than his father. Yet ten years later his father's



inheritance came to him also, when Richard the elder fell at Wakefield. When we add his other relationships: that his uncles and aunts were allied in marriage to the house of Fauconbridge, Latimer, Abergavenny, Mowbray, and Stafford; that his sisters were married into the houses of Arundel, Tiptoft, Stanley, Bonville and de Vere; that even the church had one Neville Bishop of Durham, and another Bishop of Exeter;<sup>1</sup> that his uncle by marriage, Richard Duke of York, was Protector of the Realm, and ready to give any of the great offices into Neville hands, then the catalogue nears an end. It may seem a somewhat wearisome catalogue. Yet the recital of it serves a purpose if it impresses on the mind the amazing position held by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. One thing remains to be said, namely, that

Richard, Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker.

<sup>1</sup> And later Archbishop of York.

the man himself had all the qualities of a leader. He was a cautious and sensible statesman, an adequate general, ambitious but not without principle, firm yet not cruel, able from the early days of manhood to use the power which lay in his hands. We shall no longer be surprised that this Neville of a younger branch is called "The Kingmaker". We might go further; we might almost call the years 1460 to 1471 the "reign of Richard Neville".

## § 2. *The Seizure of the Crown by the House of York.*

It is needless to go fully into all the politics and warfare of this troubled time. All that can be done is to outline them, dwelling on the more salient points. Since the overthrow at St. Albans Margaret never left plotting, but it was not till 1459 that

1459. Margaret's  
counterstroke.

she felt strong enough to risk a blow. Even then the Lancastrians were beaten at Bloreheath; but they had their revenge a month later, when the Yorkist force deserted wholesale at Ludford, and the leaders had to flee the country, Warwick and Salisbury to Calais, York to Ireland. In 1460 they returned, defeated the Lancastrians at Northampton, when Lord Grey de Ruthyn turned traitor and helped the Yorkists over the fortifications in the Lancastrian lines. Henry himself taken prisoner was the chief prize of the victory, and the Duke of York appearing in London began to set forward his claims to the throne. In the meantime Margaret and Lord Clifford were gathering fresh levies in the north. The Duke,

Battle of Wake-  
field, 1460.

Marching north to meet them, was caught with an inferior force, defeated and killed at Wakefield. A paper crown set on his head over the gates of York was Margaret's derisive answer to his hopes of a kingdom.

Wakefield fight cleared away two fathers to make room for two abler sons. Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, left his cause to his son Edward, Earl of March. Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, less fortunate even than his master, for he was taken prisoner and beheaded in cold blood, gave place to Richard his son, Warwick the Kingmaker. At first the Yorkist cause seemed desperate. Margaret's army, now swollen to a huge force, rolled



southward plundering and burning. The Yorkists were scattered, Warwick struggling to cover London, Edward far away in the west, where he had been winning the battle of Mortimer's Cross. Margaret came on Warwick at St. Albans and beat him. Again treachery had much to do with the result; a Kentish squire named Lovelace went over to the Lancastrians, and left a gap in the Yorkist lines, through which the enemy passed. The Yorkists fled in confusion: next day Warwick had not above a sixth of his army with him. This crushing defeat coming on the top of Wakefield seemed fatal. The King had been once more taken prisoner—this time by his friends. Everyone expected that a few days would see Margaret in London and Henry VI on the throne again.

Second battle  
of St. Albans,  
1460.

The chance was lost. Margaret dawdled; London—accustomed to become the prize of war—was willing to yield if only it could escape being entered by the Northerners, and King Henry persuaded his wife to agree. The respite given allowed Warwick first to join Edward, and then to return at full speed to London. The Lancastrians retreated northwards, the first step in a lost cause. Years were to pass before fate would be again kind and the wasted opportunity return.

Margaret's  
failure.

Less than six weeks saw the Lancastrian cause in the dust. Edward, now acknowledged King, pursued Margaret's army northwards and encountered it at Towton. This was the sternest fight in all the battles of the Roses. The numbers on each side were about equal, but a squall of wind and snow, blowing into the Lancastrians' faces, carried the Yorkist arrows into their ranks, and prevented their return fire from reaching the enemy. Having shot away their shafts to no purpose the Lancastrians had to leave their ground and commit themselves to an attack up hill on the Yorkist lines. For hours the battle hung in the balance, till towards afternoon, a fresh Yorkist force under Norfolk coming up on the right, gradually pressed the Lancastrian left north-westwards. The result was disastrous, for to the north and west their retreat was cut off by the little river Cock, deep and sluggish, and at this

Edward IV; battle  
of Towton, 1461.

time overflowing its banks. Nothing showed where the deep water lay, and hundreds of the Lancastrians, splashing through the flood, fell in headlong and were drowned. There was little chance for those who wore armour. The last to cross did so on the piled-up bodies of their drowned comrades. Late into the afternoon the Yorkists pressed a fiery pursuit, and when night came the Lancastrian army was annihilated.

One thing would have made Towton absolutely decisive—the capture of Margaret. Margaret, however, escaped, and for the next three years kept up a desultory struggle in the north. She got help from the Scots and the French. The fighting went on round the great castles of Alnwick, Bamborough, and Dunstanborough. Warwick and his brother, John Neville, Marquis Montagu, at length captured these strongholds, and in the battles of Hedgeley Moor and Hexham shattered the last of the Lancastrians. After Hexham, Montagu enforced his victories by beheading all the Lancastrian leaders in his hands. Among them fell Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset.

Struggle in  
the north.  
Hexham,  
1464.

### § 3. *The Quarrel of York and Neville*

The Yorkists had now nothing to fear but themselves. Hitherto the alliance of York and Neville, united by a common foe, had proved irresistible; but, the danger over, the interests of the two drifted apart. Edward IV had won the throne; but what reward could be enough for the man who put him there? To owe too much is the strongest temptation to repay nothing. A King cannot endure the continual presence of a Kingmaker. The thought must be present to the minds of both that it is even easier to unmake than to make.

Thus the next period of the war, from 1464 to 1471, covers the alienation of the house of Neville from the house of York, sees the alienation turn into open enmity, and ends with the death of the Kingmaker and the second triumph of Edward IV—this time over a Neville-Lancaster coalition.

Breach of  
York with  
Neville.

As soon as Edward IV found the Nevilles were no longer

useful, he perceived how dangerous they were. He set himself to break free from their control, and began by delivering a snub to Warwick. He allowed him to busy himself over negotiating a marriage for him with a French princess.<sup>1</sup> Edward must have smiled at the diligence Warwick displayed, since he was, as a matter of fact, already secretly married to a lady of no high rank, Elizabeth Woodville, widow of a Lancastrian knight, Sir John Grey. When the news was at last revealed by the king, Warwick was left to swallow the snub as best he could. This was not all. Edward followed it up by promoting all his wife's relations. The Woodvilles were to rise as a counterpoise to the Nevilles, and by the same means—royal favours and politic marriages. In 1467 the breach became open. George Neville, the Archbishop of York, was dismissed from the Chancellorship, and Lord Rivers, the queen's father, put in his place; then the king persuaded the Duchess of Exeter to break off her intended match with Warwick's nephew, and marry instead John Grey, the queen's eldest son. To complete Warwick's disgrace, the king sent him oversea to prepare a match for his sister, Margaret of York, with a French prince, and, directly he was out of the way, betrothed her to the son of the chief enemy of France, the Duke of Burgundy.

Once more we observe how completely the politics of the time are marriage politics. Each side strives by success in marriage to win wealth and estates, because estates and wealth mean retainers and military power; and in days when men of noble family so often died in battle or on the scaffold<sup>2</sup> there were plenty of marriageable and wealthy widows. No match is too sordid, so long as it be profitable; witness John Woodville, aged twenty-two, marrying the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk, old enough to be his grandmother; witness, again, Warwick's counterstroke to Edward's exalting of the Woodvilles. He tempted George of Clarence, the king's brother, into prospective treason by offering the hand of his own daughter, heiress of his estates, Isabel Neville; and Clarence accepted the bribe.

Marriage  
politics.  
Clarence-  
Neville.

<sup>1</sup> Bona of Savoy, sister to Louis XI's queen.

<sup>2</sup> See the Neville table: and also the Beaufort table.



Affairs were once more reaching a point when the only decision could be by the sword. Lancastrian partisans again appeared in the country. In 1469 the whole of South Yorkshire burst into rebellion under Sir John Conyers, a relation of Warwick's by marriage. At Edward's summons Warwick himself came over from Calais, with George Neville and the Duke of Clarence (now his son-in-law) with him. Far from helping Edward, Warwick raised a force against him. Some of the king's soldiers went over to the Neville side; the force under Lord Herbert, who remained loyal, was shattered by Conyers at Edgecote. Edward himself was captured at night by George Neville and a party of Warwick's men-at-arms.

Edgecote Field.  
Capture of  
King Edward.

Warwick had the game in his hands, but was just too honourable to win it. He might have put Edward to death, and once more played the part of a kingmaker, this time for his son-in-law, Clarence's, benefit. Yet, though doubtless Edward would have had no hesitation in ordering Warwick's head off, Warwick was more scrupulous. He contented himself with taking vengeance on the Woodvilles, two of whom he caused to be beheaded; from the king he exacted no more than promises. Probably, over-confident of his own strength, he thought that he had given Edward a sufficient lesson. In a sense he had, yet scarcely what he intended. He had wished to discipline a young man, but he had created an implacable enemy, all the more dangerous that the pupil had taken the lesson with a smiling countenance.

Then came a year of revolutions. In March, 1470, Edward collected forces to subdue a rising in Lincolnshire, and turning suddenly on Warwick and Clarence, forced them to flee oversea. In France they found the scattered remains of the Lancastrian party, with the dauntless Margaret of Anjou at their head. Strange were the privations they had gone through, the young prince "begging from house to house", the queen, without money, baggage, or gowns, sharing a herring for the food of herself and her son, and reduced to borrow at mass from a Scottish archer, who, "rather loath, drew a Scots groat from his purse, and lent it to her". Louis XI saw his chance of striking a counter-blow at

Flight of  
the Nevilles.  
Alliance with  
Margaret of  
Anjou, 1470.

Edward to punish him for his alliance with Burgundy. He persuaded Warwick and Margaret to come to terms. It was not easy to reconcile the two who for twenty years had been the bitterest of foes, but in such tortuous policy Louis XI was a master. Warwick at length declared for King Henry, and crowned the alliance with the usual betrothal, this time of his daughter Anne to Margaret's son, Prince Edward. At first fortune smiled on this perfidious alliance. In September Warwick and Clarence landed in the west; again Edward's men deserted him. He narrowly escaped capture at the hands of Montagu, Warwick's brother, and hastily fled from Lynn to Burgundy. Henry VI was taken from the Tower, "not cleanly kept, as should seem such a prince", newly arrayed, and set once more on a puppet throne.

Return of  
Warwick.  
Restoration  
of Henry VI.  
Flight of  
Edward IV.

Then the wheel went round again. Edward gathered his men, and landed at Ravenspur. He had but 300 with him: Richard of Gloucester came to shore in the Humber mouth with another 200; Earl Rivers brought another handful. It seemed a hopeless enterprise to unmake the Kingmaker with so small a force. Yet Ravenspur was of good omen as a starting-point for a cast at a throne, "since even in the same place the usurper Henry of Derby landed after his exile". The parallel goes closer; even as Henry of Derby gave out that he came but to claim his rightful Duchy of Lancaster, so Edward of March announced that all he sought was his Dukedom of York; as the one adventurer became the fourth King Henry, the other established himself as the fourth King Edward.

Edward's  
return,  
1471.

Edward's march south shows what courage and fortune may do. Montagu missed him, and followed too tardily in pursuit. Warwick drew in Clarence, to stop him in the Midlands, but Clarence went over to his brother. The Kingmaker prepared to defend his own castle of Warwick; Edward marched straight to London. Then, as Warwick followed, Edward again came northwards, and met him at Barnet. The battle, fought in a dense fog, which caused the wing of each army to overlap the other, was decided more by chance than skill. The Earl of Oxford's Lancastrians, after driving off

Battle of  
Barnet, 1471.

their Yorkist opponents, lost their way, and came back on the rear of their own force. Their badge, the "Radiant Star", was mistaken for Edward IV's badge, the "Sun with Rays", and they were greeted with a shower of arrows. At once a cry of "Treachery!" ran all down the line. Treachery was what all the array of Nevilles and Lancastrians had expected; none trusted the other, since times without number they had been foes. Immediately their ranks were broken. Warwick himself paid the usual penalty of a lost battle—being killed "something flying" in the chronicler's words. Heavy armour made battle safe, but defeat fatal.

Fortune indeed had turned her back on the Neville cause at last; for a month Margaret had been on the French shore waiting to cross; for a month a great storm had held her prisoner. She landed at Weymouth too late, on that same Easter Day which saw Warwick fight his last fight at Barnet. Her help, which would have changed the fate of that day, was now useless. She turned westwards, but on May 4 was overtaken and beaten at Tewkesbury. There, in the pursuit through the "Bloody Meadow", fell Prince Edward vainly begging for mercy. Somerset was taken prisoner and executed, adding one more victim to the roll of his luckless house. The father was killed at St. Albans; the elder son beheaded at Hexham; the third son killed at Tewkesbury; the second beheaded the next day after the battle. No male was left to the line of Beauforts, and the Yorkists may have rejoiced at the extinction of their hereditary enemies. They had still, however, to reckon with one descendant of the female line, a boy named Henry Tudor, then fourteen years old.<sup>1</sup>

Tewkesbury ends the third acute phase of the Wars of the Roses. The first battle of St. Albans saw the allied houses of York and Neville triumph over the Beauforts; Towton marked their victory over King Henry; Barnet and Tewkesbury found the old allies at each other's throats, and ended in the downfall of the Neville power. The last phase traces the gradual break-up of the Yorkist power owing to the same cause that had exalted it—family ambition.

<sup>1</sup> See table, p. 214.



The remaining years of Edward IV's reign passed quietly. The king was personally popular; Henry VI had been put out of the way—he died on the day of Edward's triumphant return from Tewkesbury, probably murdered by Gloucester; most of the Lancastrian leaders were dead; those who survived were exiles, poor, and in misery. Parliament, when it met, was on the whole content to let the king rule according to his pleasure. And pleasure was the main thing Edward sought. He did indeed embark on a war with France; if it was not glorious, it was at any rate of more practical use than many of our wars, for Louis XI bought him off with the payment of 72,000 crowns down, and promises of a further annuity. Edward might look forward to many years of life; he had two sons to succeed him; it might be assumed that the house of York was secure.

#### § 4. *The Break-up of the Yorkist Power*

Suddenly in 1483 Edward died, at the early age of forty-two, leaving his kingdom to his young son Edward V, and England was again thrown into confusion by the ambition of Richard of Gloucester, that uncle who personifies the wickedness of so many historical uncles. Richard had already given proof of that ruthless and unscrupulous ability which was the mark of his house. Battle, murder, and sudden death were his constant companions. He had fought well at Barnet and Tewkesbury; men believed that he had helped to stab Prince Edward; the murder of King Henry VI was laid at his door; he had quarrelled with his brother George of Clarence over the Neville inheritance, for the two had each married a daughter of the Kingmaker, and he contrived to fill Edward's mind with those dark suspicions which caused Clarence to be imprisoned in the Tower, and there put to death. With the death of a king, a prince, and a brother already to his account, he was an ominous "Protector" to two young nephews. Yet in the eyes of the nation, who knew little of State secrets and had grown used to violence, he was not distrusted. He was rather looked on as the strong man who

Death of  
Edward IV,  
1483.

Richard of  
Gloucester.

might secure peace. His dreadful methods of securing it lay still hidden in the future.

We have seen first Richard of York, and then Richard of Warwick pushed into treason, in order to secure their own lives.

Richard's position:  
overthrow of the  
Woodvilles and  
the Queen's party.

In a sense it was so with Richard of Gloucester. Between him and the Queen's party, the Greys and the Woodvilles, there was an old feud. If they were supreme, his life was likely to be forfeit. Richard's first step was to "rescue" the young king from the hands of his Woodville uncle, Earl Rivers. Together with the Duke of Buckingham he met the King's retinue at Stoney Stratford, bringing a number of retainers with him. He captured Rivers and Sir Richard Grey, sent them to prison at Middleham, and himself escorted the King to London. His next step was to rid himself of Lord Hastings, with whom he picked an intentional quarrel over the council table, and ended it by causing his head to be smitten off on a log outside the door. Little Edward V was installed in his royal palace of the Tower, soon to become his prison and his grave. It was no use to lop off one heir if the younger brother survived, and the younger brother was in sanctuary with his mother Elizabeth at Westminster. Gloucester inveigled him out as a companion for his brother, and sent him too to the Tower.

All was now ready. London was packed with retainers bearing the Boar and the Knot.<sup>1</sup> The court chaplain and

Richard king.  
Murder of  
the princes.

Buckingham urged Richard's claim to the throne, on the ground that Edward's marriage was invalid: the silent arguments of the men-at-arms in the background were perhaps more convincing. The peers offered Richard the throne. Richard accepted it: to guard against opposition he had already ordered Rivers and Grey to be beheaded. To make himself more secure he caused James Tyrrel, governor of the Tower, to procure the murder of the little princes (Aug. 1483).

This vile deed eclipsed anything done before by either side. Not Clifford at Wakefield, nor Margaret at St. Albans, nor Montagu at Hexham, nor Edward at Tewkesbury, nor even Tip-

<sup>1</sup> Gloucester and Buckingham badges.

toft Earl of Worcester, the "great butcher of England", who tortured his prisoners ere he slew them, had ever matched this. Henceforth Richard had no friends save the cowards who feared to desert him, or the obscure men whom he promoted. One after another, plots were made. First his former ally the Duke of Buckingham, aided by the Courtenays and other westerners, plotted to put Henry of Richmond, son of Margaret Beaufort, on the throne. The stars in their courses fought against Buckingham. Storms prevented Richmond from landing, while a huge flood of rain so swelled the Severn into what was long remembered as "Buckingham's great water" that the Duke was cut off from his friends, captured and beheaded. Richard's ferocious treatment of Buckingham had only made one more section of Yorkists into Lancastrians. His next wild scheme was to divorce his wife Anne Neville,<sup>1</sup> and marry his niece Elizabeth of York, daughter to Edward IV. In universal horror all who still held by the cause of York resolved that it were better to have a Lancastrian on the throne than Richard III.

Thus in 1485 Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, now allied with the Queen's faction of the Woodvilles, and under a promise to marry Elizabeth of York, landed in Wales to win a final victory for Lancaster. Welshmen joined a man with a Welsh name. The Lancastrian houses of the Marches joined him; yet he seemed to have but a puny chance when at Bosworth, with 5000 men, he met Richard with more than double his number. But when Oxford led the Lancastrian attack, half Richard's men hung back, while the Stanleys turned traitors and fell on Richard's flank. The battle was won at a cost of a bare hundred men, and even the defeated side lost but few more. Yet one life counted many hundred. Richard himself, pierced with many wounds, lay dead on the field.

The battle of Bosworth, and the accession of Henry VII is held to end this troubled time. The union of the two roses, Henry the Red with Elizabeth the White Rose of York, brings

<sup>1</sup> She saved him the trouble by dying (March, 1485).



the chapter to an end with a touch of romantic completeness. We are tempted to think of the fairy prince, after many persecutions by robbers and demons, killing the ogre in single combat, wedding the princess, and living happily ever afterwards. The comparison is singularly false. There was nothing of the fairy prince about the astute, relentless, money-getting character of Henry VII. Nor did disorder die as suddenly as Richard III; it did not perish on Bosworth Field. It revived in Lovel's

Lambert Simnel.  
Battle of Stoke,  
1487.

insurrection, when Lambert Simnel was put up to personate the heir of George of Clarence, and when a mixed array of Yorkists, German mercenaries, and levies from Ireland, where the cause of York had always been strong, fought one more fight at Stoke and lost it. Stoke is the last battle of the Wars of the Roses. Yet for eleven years more Henry was pestered with another Yorkist pretender,

Warbeck.

Perkin Warbeck, who pretended to be the younger of the princes murdered in the Tower. Perkin made the round of Henry's foes. He harboured in Burgundy with the Yorkist Duchess Margaret; he risked a landing in Kent; he intrigued in Ireland; he deceived James IV of Scotland into treating him as a royal prince, and won the Scottish king's cousin in marriage; he hovered like a thundercloud that will neither burst nor disperse. At length he landed in Devonshire, and was made prisoner. Even in prison the mischief he did was not ended. He inveigled his fellow prisoner Edward of Clarence into a plot to escape; and Henry VII's patience being at an end, both of them were executed. Warbeck deserved little sympathy; but it was hard measure for the young Clarence, who had been sixteen years in prison, first Richard III's captive, and then Henry VII's. The change of dynasty had brought him no relief; he was dangerous to both sides. Henry no doubt felt as Essex felt about Strafford, that "stone dead hath no fellow". There were no more plots.

So, as in the days of the Judges, the land had rest forty years, and more than forty years, from the trouble that had afflicted it. When we reach the end of the dreary record of violence, we are left to gather from the ruins some general lessons on the whole scene, and some indications of the future. And the first

thing to remark is the shattering of the power of the great houses. They that took the sword perished by the sword; few barons lived to lose more than one battle, for the butchery in pursuit fell first on the heavily armoured nobles, and close behind the pursuer's spear marched the headman's axe. The fate of the Beauforts

End of the  
Wars of the  
Roses.  
Fall of the  
great houses.

(see page 211) only differed in degree from the fate of many noble families. And just as in the press of battle once down meant down for ever, so too in the political struggle with the King. For a hundred years attempts had been made to make the throne the prize of family ambition; for thirty years this prize had been at the mercy of the best fighter. It had been a political tournament open to all competitors with royal blood in their veins, fought *à outrance* with the added liberty of striking below the belt. Henry VII, as the last competitor, emerged from the lists the ultimate victor. And he was victor: he never allowed the rivals he had overthrown to rise again. Their power had rested on the retainers; they and not the crown wielded the fighting force of the nation. By his statute of "Livery" Henry destroyed the retainer. It was made illegal to dispense "Livery", the uniform or badge "delivered" to those who had contracted to fight for their employer. No longer would the Bear and Ragged Staff,<sup>1</sup> the Knot,<sup>2</sup> the Portcullis,<sup>3</sup> or the White Lion<sup>4</sup> disturb their neighbours. A writer of a political squib in 1450 says:

Statute of  
"Livery".

"The Rote<sup>5</sup> is dead, the Swanne<sup>6</sup> is gone,  
The Fiery Cresset<sup>7</sup> hath lost his light,  
Therefore England may make great moan".

He bewails the death of the men. Had he lived forty years later he would have seen the extinction of the badges, and England had no cause to moan over that. The "private soldier" in his plain sense disappeared, and with him the curse of private war. Even so stanch a friend of King Henry's as the Earl of Oxford was sentenced to a heavy fine for welcoming the King with a body of men wearing the "Radiant Star" of de Vere. Henry could not endure to see his laws broken in his sight.

The badges of <sup>1</sup>Warwick, <sup>2</sup>Buckingham, <sup>3</sup>Beaufort, <sup>4</sup>Mowbray, <sup>5</sup>John Duke of Bedford, <sup>6</sup>Humphrey of Gloucester, and <sup>7</sup>John Holland Duke of Exeter.

Just as the Statute of Livery disarmed the rebel, so the Statute of Maintenance crippled the bully. For fifty years the law courts had been of little use, because no jury dared to do its duty against a great lord. When a case in which he was concerned was tried his men-at-arms would crowd the court, ready to intimidate the jury by what is cynically called "moral" force, ready even to back this up by physical violence, should the other fail. This "Maintenance" of an adherent's suit in court by pressure was now made illegal. Relieved from fear, the ordinary law courts could be trusted once more to give justice.

Yet one more precaution was taken by Henry VII in his creation of the Star Chamber. This court, though set up by Act of Parliament, owed its powers indirectly to the Crown. The King in theory was the fount of justice. Sitting in his council he could deal with offenders too powerful for the ordinary law. Henry VII had no wish to be judge himself; the days for a king on the bench were past; but his powers were handed over to the Star Chamber. In it sat the Chancellor, Treasurer, and Privy Seal, a bishop, and two chief justices, armed with powers to suppress all breaches of the law by offenders too noble or too high to be reached by the ordinary courts. It could punish by fines and imprisonment; it could deal with juries who gave unsatisfactory verdicts; it was, in short, a court to protect the weak against the strong. It is strange that in its later days it should be turned from its original use, and become the engine of tyranny, a byword of oppression.

Thus either in battle, or on the scaffold, or under the new authority of the Crown, the barons' power dwindled. No longer monopolizing the great offices of State, no longer exalted by intermarriage with royal sons and daughters—for Henry began a new policy of marriage—the great houses ceased to be a menace to the kingdom. Their power passed away, but the dread of it lived on later. As we shall see, under the Tudors the nation steadily supported the Crown, even when it seemed tyrannous, for fear that to weaken it might open the door to disorder once more.

The great baronial houses perished in the turmoil they had created. They perished, however, alone. The Wars of the



Roses hardly touched the common folk. The fact becomes clear at once if the Wars of the Roses be compared with the Civil War of 1642. That teems with sieges: the attitude of London, the resistance of Gloucester, the capture of Bristol, the plot against Hull; these, and a host of others, mark a political or military crisis. In the Wars of the Roses are no sieges, save of the Lancastrian castles in the north. No town was interested enough to stand a siege in the cause of Lancaster or York; when the enemy draws near it surrenders; when the enemy departs it thanks God that it is rid of a knave. The struggle was of the barons, not of the people. True, the party of York was more "popular" than the party of Lancaster. The Lancastrians had enjoyed a longer time to exhibit their capacity for misgovernment, and their supporters from the Welsh borders and the north were unusually fierce and lawless, even in a lawless age. Hence well-to-do merchants, peaceful traders, and honest craftsmen, were Yorkist rather than Lancastrian. But they confined their encouragement to sympathy; they took no active share. Hence, save for the local disorder, the realm thrived well enough; its industrial progress went on steadily; its wool trade with Burgundy was not interrupted; some of the older towns decayed, but new ones were springing up.

Contrast between  
Wars of Roses and  
Civil War of 1642.

We find how little the bulk of England cared about the wars in another contrast to the Civil War. There, men act from high motives, and cling sternly to duty: they do not fight for their own gain, but because they believe King or Parliament to be right; and in the struggle we find famous men, and noble deeds in plenty. The Wars of the Roses produced no great man, and no noble deed. Warwick is the most striking figure, and it may be admitted that for a time he tried to do his duty. But when duty became difficult and dangerous, he chose treason. The truth is that there was no further place for him. He had raised Edward to the throne; henceforth he could only be his patron or his enemy. Edward was too masterful to obey a patron; Warwick, too proud to sink into a courtier, and too powerful to be tolerated as a foe. The idea of a great minister under the throne was not yet developed.

Thus, when Warwick fell from the path of honesty, he deserves some sympathy as a man placed in an impossible position and confronted with extreme temptation. But of the other players in the tragedy there is little that is good to be said. True that a few were loyal to their party, but that by itself is no great virtue; the majority were not even honest. Half of the battles were decided by treason or the expectation of it. Scarcely a noble house that did not sway and veer in its

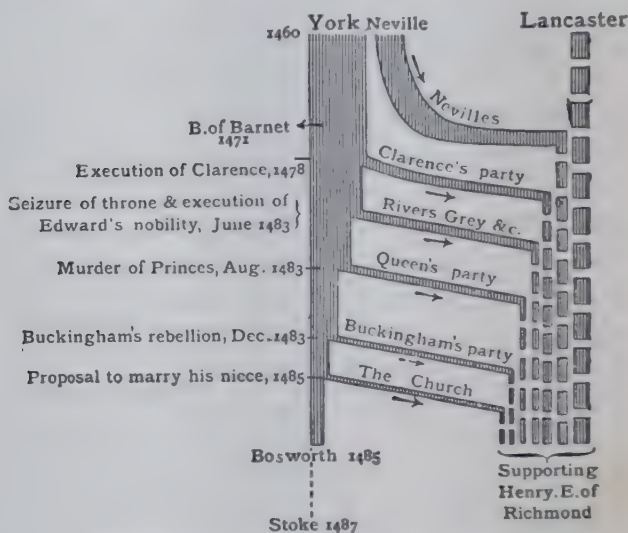


Diagram of the Break-up of the Yorkist Power

politics as the wind blew from York or Lancaster. Therefore, all the good features of the Civil War—loyalty, integrity, mercy—are replaced in the Wars of the Roses by treachery, self-seeking, and cruelty; the one is the best form of party struggle, and the other the worst form of faction.

The house of York, at one time so strong, was broken away piecemeal. First it lost the Nevilles; then the Clarence faction; then Richard III quarrelled with Edward's nobility, the Greys and the Woodvilles; his seizure of the throne cost him all Edward's friends and the support of Burgundy; his brutal murder of the little princes sent Edward's queen into the Lancastrian ranks; Buckingham rebelled against him; finally, his monstrous proposal to marry his niece alienated the Church. It was like

that familiar bundle of sticks, strong enough when tied, easily snapped when single. But the final snapping of them meant more than the destruction of a house, or of a party, or even of a policy. It is the break between medieval and modern England.

## XXI. Henry VII

### 1. Introductory: The New Ideas

Physical geography makes us familiar with the idea of a watershed. A homely but misleading image likens it to a house roof, whose sharp ridge divides the rain falling on it; in reality the watersheds of our own land are generally less defined; they are often flat, boggy, high grounds, where the water lies in stagnant pools, apparently going nowhither. It is only when we go down the hill in one direction or the other that the actual course of the streams becomes evident. So with the division between medieval and modern England. Henry VII's reign is on the parting of the ways—its character is indeterminate. Most of the king's legislation is medieval; much of his policy, especially his marriage policy, is modern. Yet if we go back or forward a little we have no doubts about the character of the surroundings. Warwick is medieval, but Wolsey is not. Richard III, with an environment of axe and dagger, murder and sudden death, belongs to the museum of historical antiquities; Henry VIII, though scarcely less blood-stained, is yet essentially modern. We can almost picture him concerned with things of our own day, his mind full of modern questionings as to the Rise of Ritualism, What to do with the Unemployed, or Is Marriage a Failure?

The turning-point  
between Medieval  
and Modern.

It is not difficult to find the new characteristics which mark off the age of the Tudors. There is the policy of what historians call "*dynastic marriages*"—marriage alliances by which monarchs attempt to build up world empires, adding kingdom to kingdom by

Characteristics of  
the Tudor times:  
1. Dynastic  
marriages.



marriages, as the barons in the Wars of the Roses had added estate to estate. One development of this policy threatened to link England with Spain; another seemed likely to couple Scotland and France; a third, with more auspicious union, did join England and Scotland, and the union has not been shaken. There was the invention of *printing*; and there was

2. New Learning. the *new learning*, the substitution of criticism  
 3. Reformation. for blind obedience to authority. Then there  
 4. England as a sea power. was also the moving of the waters of religion,

ending in the *Reformation*. The realm wavered between the old faith and the new, and in the end became Protestant; that change, too, was final. Lastly, there was the abandonment of the old policy of conquering territory in France, and, in its stead, the inrush into the *New World* which began the making of the British Empire, our latest and greatest inheritance. Any one of these would suffice to mark a new epoch; together they cleave a huge chasm between the old and the new.

These characteristics, it is true, are not peculiar to England, nor indeed English in origin. Spain gave the earliest examples of successful dynastic marriages; she also, with Portugal, was first in the New World. The new learning had its birth in Italy. Germany led that revolt against Rome, which, with varying severity, attacked in turn every European country. Not merely does Tudor England differ widely from Plantagenet England; the same difference reveals itself between fifteenth-century Europe and sixteenth-century Europe, and to understand English history at this period we must note the change that was taking place in the states around.

Put briefly, it is the change from the old word "Christendom" to the modern word "Europe". In old times, though men of Italy, France, Spain, Germany, and England spoke different tongues and were of different race, yet they had some common bonds. They were all of one church, all members of Christendom, all in a sense under the headship of Pope and Emperor -- the "Two Swords" to which Christ's words on Gethsemane were held to apply. The name "Christendom" had, thus, a *monarchic* sense; it implied a common faith, some unity of purpose, and a common obedience to Christ's Regents

on earth. But the name "Europe" bears no such meaning. It is *anarchic*, for Europe owns obedience to no ruler, and has no community of purpose; there is no longer even one church. Europe is a collection of independent states, each under its own government; these states are indeed joined by geography and entangled by politics, but each is <sup>The idea of</sup> "nation". seeking its own interest. This momentous change from "Christendom" to "Europe" was brought about by the appearance of a new political idea—the idea of the "*nation*".

The latter half of the fifteenth century saw the decay of feudalism and the building up of strong monarchies. It saw Louis XI create France; it saw that union of Aragon and Castile in the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, which made Spain; it saw the Tudor line begin to heal the wounds left by the Wars of the Roses, and set up a monarchy which was really supreme. In each country, too, came a vigorous growth of national spirit, and a pride in national power. This spirit of national ambition revealed itself in Charles VIII of France's expedition into Italy; in the long struggle between France and Spain, in which England took now one side, now the other; in the new idea that the religion of each nation was a matter for its own concern and its own decision; and in the rivalry for the New World. Thus in a sense the new characteristics which we observed as marking the Tudor England spring from a cause which is common to the whole of Europe, the *growth of national feeling*. For a time the new spirit was encumbered with the wreckage of the past—old beliefs, old policies, old traditions of the Medieval Papacy and the Medieval Empire. By degrees these were cleared away, and the new system, the society of "nations", set up in its place. True, that to begin with the important nations were only France, Spain, and England. Germany and Italy were still unnational, overweighted the one with the Empire, the other with the Papacy; and centuries had to elapse before these, or the unwieldy power of Russia, entered upon the scene of international politics. When we think of the State system of Europe in our own day, we are apt to forget how very new are some of its members.

## 2. The Seed Time

Henry VII's reign was a period of remedy and a period of seed time. The remedies belonged to past ills; these fall in their natural place at the end of the story of the Wars of the Roses. The sowing was to bear great fruit in the future. For the meantime the results were hidden. We need only notice briefly what like the seed was.

1. First came the planting of the overpoweringly strong Tudor monarchy. The Wars of the Roses had left the barons exhausted, the Commons utterly discredited, and the realm The Tudor "despotism" filled with one great longing, namely, for peace. Peace could only be assured by the keeping of good order: order, it seemed, could only be kept by a strong king. Hence the determination of the nation to support the Crown. Let the king only be strong and of a good courage, and all would be well. Were he weak, or were the succession doubtful, disorder might break out again. Henry VII was avaricious, and Henry VIII seemed fitful and bloodthirsty; Mary was a Catholic, and a persecutor of Protestant subjects; yet all had, on the whole, the support of the people. The Tudors are sometimes spoken of as despots. If this be understood to mean stern absolute rulers, on whom Parliament imposed very little check, the name is fitting. If we infer that they held their people crushed down in an unwilling servitude, the inference is wrong. The Tudors were absolute because England believed in them, trusted them, and was willing that they should be absolute.

Various causes helped them to be absolute. Henry VII gathered a great hoard of money, then as now an unfailing source of power. His ministers—Cardinal Morton, Empson, and Dudley—used all sorts of methods to fill his exchequer, partly by demanding benevolences, more by imposing large fines on all who had trespassed on the rights of the Crown. Henry VIII spent all that his father had collected, but enriched himself in his turn by plundering the monasteries and the Church.

The coming into common use of gunpowder also strengthened



the Crown. For more than a hundred years gunpowder had been known, but the early guns and cannons were so clumsy that they did not at first supersede the bow and the old siege-engines. When, however, artillery began to be efficient, the value of the old baronial castle dwindled away; and as the king alone possessed artillery, he had an advantage in war with which no rebel could compete. Further, since bullets were no respecters of either persons or plate-armour, the armoured knight no longer enjoyed comparative immunity in battle as he had done in the old days. War was no longer a pastime for him. As the risk to his life increased, he grew less willing to hazard it, less ready to fly to arms in order to back a quarrel.

Gunpowder  
and artillery.

2. Henry VII's reign saw the Genoese navigator Columbus discover the New World for Spain (1492), and Vasco da Gama round the Cape of Good Hope and open the route to the East for Portugal (1497). Nor was England content merely to look on. In 1497 some Bristol merchants fitted out an English ship, which under Venetian leaders—John and Sebastian Cabot—first reached the mainland of America. The value of these discoveries was slow to reveal itself. None the less, the change when it came was enormous. Commerce began to pass from the “thalassic” to the “oceanic” stage; that is to say, that while hitherto it had gone along the landlocked seas, especially the Mediterranean, it now began to put out on to the Atlantic. The change of trade routes meant much to England. While the Mediterranean had been the highway, England had been far off. The new highway lay at her door. Henceforth the states with an oceanic seaboard rose, those with a thalassic seaboard declined. England, France, Spain, and the Low Countries thrived; Venice, Genoa, and the Mediterranean ports dwindled. Henry VII's reign saw only the sowing of the seed; yet when the harvest came long years after, it was a great one for England.

The New  
World  
“oceanic”  
commerce.

3. So, too, with the new learning. Taking its second birth, its “renaissance” in Italy, it spread to other lands, bringing with it an enthusiasm for learning, especially for classical learning, and a desire to search out what was true. In its origin there was nothing about the new learning hostile to the old

The new  
learning.

faith. At first more than one Pope encouraged and patronized the scholars. And when some of these, in their enthusiasm for Greek and Roman culture, were tempted into irreligious expressions, the Church treated them on the whole with the mild disregard which parents extend to wilful children. Unfortunately, though there was nothing anti-religious in the study of classical Latin, and even of Greek, part of the authority of the Popes was held to rest on certain documents, such as the Donation of Constantine and the statements in the Forged Decretals, which in an ignorant age had been accepted as genuine, but which could not really bear investigation. The new spirit of research and criticism did not confine itself to classical texts; it attacked theological claims also. This the Papacy felt to be undesirable, if not dangerous; and thus the new learning and the theologians gradually parted company. In Henry VII's reign the severance of the ways had not been reached; Grocyn and Linacre, who taught Greek at Oxford, and Colet, who lectured on the Greek Testament, were only interested in spreading *learning*. Yet in the Flemish scholar Erasmus the signs of the coming struggle appear. Erasmus was always ready to mock the theology of the monks. Doubtless the monks' erudition was old-fashioned and often absurd. Yet ridicule is the first step in sapping the foundations of belief. Erasmus never became a Protestant, but he set the feet of many of his followers on the road. Again the seed lay in the ground germinating.

4. So it was also with the policy of dynastic marriages—marriages, that is to say, among royal houses, intended to bring great inheritances and unite realms. It may seem at first sight out of character that this policy should accompany the growth of a national spirit, since it is absolutely at variance with ideas of national policy as we know them now. To us the marriage alliances of crowned heads mean little or nothing in deciding national intercourse.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a monarch had not yet become merely an official. He was not yet the possession of his people. On the contrary, the people were his. He directed the policy of the country, and his friendship would naturally express itself in marriage alliance. Marriages formed the easiest

bond, and might prove most profitable in acquiring new dominions. Hence all statesmen were matchmakers. That a nation might object to such political *mariages de convenance* would not be a matter of serious concern to the kings and statesmen who arranged them. England was now for the first time about to join in a group of dynastic marriages, the effects of which deeply influenced European history during a great part of the sixteenth century; indeed European history of the time all hangs on them.

We have already mentioned Charles VIII's expedition to Italy. In 1494 that French monarch had allied himself with Milan, Genoa, and Florence, had marched an army through the length of Italy, and had seized the kingdom of Naples. The ease and effrontery with which his success was won alarmed everyone. Maximilian, who as Emperor had claims on Milan, and Ferdinand of Spain, who had claims on Naples, and the Pope, who was terrified at this sudden intrust of a mailed hand from over the Alps, all sought means to guard themselves against this pushing dangerous French monarch. The natural enemy of France was in their eyes England. Hence they strove to make alliance with Henry VII. They argued that he could, if he chose, keep France occupied at home; and if France were occupied at home, she would not be in mischief in Italy. Henry was willing to join them, and thus England took the first step in the dynastic marriages which were to prove a menace to the country for a whole century, and, after all, end fortunately.

The French  
in Italy.

It is impossible to understand the history of the time without a knowledge of this group of marriages in which England was now joining.

The story begins with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon with Isabella of Castile, which formed the nucleus round which the nation of Spain gradually formed out of the mass of little kingdoms and provinces of the Peninsula. About the same time Maximilian of Austria (of the house of Hapsburg) had married Mary of Burgundy, thus winning for the house of Hapsburg all Charles the Bold's Burgundian dominions, including the Low Countries. The daughter and heiress of the Spanish

Spain and the  
house of Haps-  
burg: its  
alliance with  
England.

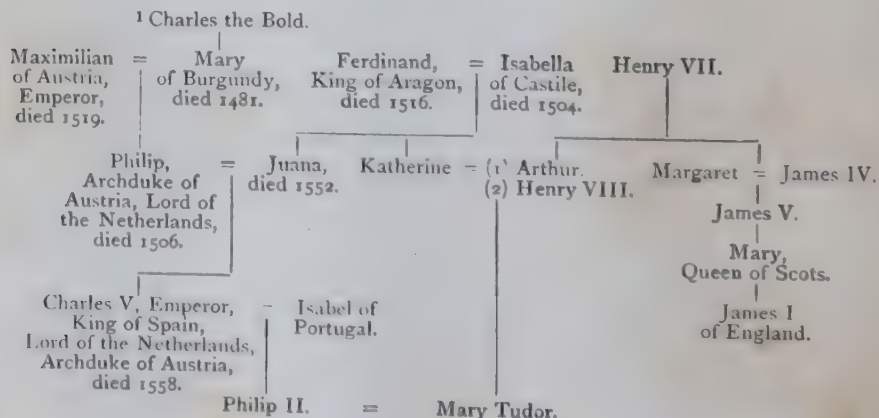


sovereigns, Juana, married Philip the Handsome, Maximilian's only son. This brought the Hapsburgs into Spain. The newborn son of Philip and Juana, Charles (born 1500) would be heir to vast dominions. Spain, the duchy of Austria, Burgundy and the Low Countries, lands in Italy, and the Spanish possessions oversea would all be his. The prize that was offered to Henry VII was the hand of Katherine of Aragon, sister to Juana, and Henry accepted it for his eldest son, Arthur. Arthur, however, died within a year of his marriage, and the bride was affianced to the king's second son Henry, afterwards Henry VIII.

Here, then, was the first great marriage-stroke, entwining the fortunes of England with those of Spain and Austria, securing its aid against the ambition of France. In the future lay other unexpected great events destined to spring from it—the English Reformation and the Marian persecution.

Not content with this, another blow was aimed at France by the politicians of the house of Hapsburg. France had been the enemy of England, and therefore the ally of Scotland. To detach the Scots from the French and so leave France isolated would be a master-stroke. To effect this the hand of Margaret, Henry VII's elder daughter, was offered to James IV of Scotland, and that monarch accepted it (1502).<sup>1</sup>

Having thus raised England to a position of great influence in Europe Henry VII died, and left the working out of his schemes to his son.



## XXII. Henry VIII and Wolsey

Henry VIII's long reign divides naturally enough into two periods. In the first the interest lies mainly abroad; eyes are fixed on international rivalries between France and Spain, the Empire and the Popes, and on diplomatic struggles amongst them. The second is taken up with the Reformation. The connecting point between the two is the question of the King's divorce. The two periods present a contrast. The earlier one, though full of an appearance of greatness, is in reality curiously barren of material results. Out of all the scheming, intrigues, and alliances emerges practically nothing that is tangible. The later period is perhaps the most momentous time in the whole of English history. Yet though in most respects the first period was fruitless, it was notable for one thing. It contained Wolsey: and Wolsey was the first statesman to raise England to a great place in European politics.

Henry VIII's  
reign.

Divisions.

The new feature of European politics of the time has been already mentioned—it was the rise of national feeling showing itself in the creation of nation-states. This new idea, however, was still encumbered with the old conditions: it was striving with the Medieval notion of Christendom, the headship of Papacy and Empire. Hence the chief theatre of the politics lay in Italy. It was there that the new forces would come most strongly in contact with the old surroundings. In Italian affairs, the Empire, Spain, and France were all concerned. The Emperor was by title King of the Romans. Spain and France both had claims to push in the kingdom of Naples. But England had no direct interests or claims. Hitherto in the eyes of Papacy and Empire, in the ideas of Christendom, her place had been unimportant. It is a significant fact that at the Council of Constance (1414), where the voting went by *nations*, England was not recognized as a separate nation at all. She was grouped with the Germans.

By intervening in these European politics which had their centre in Italy, England placed itself on a level with France, Spain, and the Empire; by the skill which Wolsey showed in

setting off one nation against the other, England for a time seemed to be arbiter in Europe. Finally it was through Italian politics that Henry's divorce was refused to him, thus bringing about the breach with Rome and the Reformation.

Since for the first twenty years of Henry VIII's reign the attitude of England was the chief question for all diplomatists, and since, further, England's diplomacy lay in the hands of the greatest diplomatist she has ever produced, some knowledge of the course of events is essential, even though at the end none of the results aimed at appear to be attained, and the outcome is barren when compared with the intricate and busy negotiations and changes which mark the time.

After Charles VIII's expedition into Italy, that country had been in a constant state of confusion. Louis XII, the successor of Charles VIII, had captured Milan. Then in alliance with Ferdinand of Aragon, French and Spaniards had made a joint attack on Naples, only to quarrel in the next year. In 1508 the selfish policy of the time reached a climax, when France, Spain, and Pope Julius II united in the *League of Cambrai* to attack and divide the territories of Venice. France took the lion's share of the plunder, and Pope Julius II, seeing with alarm that this sort of political brigandage would in all likelihood next be turned against the lands of the Papacy, deserted the French, and formed a fresh alliance for his own protection. This *Holy League* included Ferdi-

The Holy League  
between Spain  
and the Pope.  
England joins it.

nand of Spain. The natural way of getting rid of the French from Italy was to occupy them at home. Ferdinand planned an invasion of Navarre, and invited his son-in-law, Henry VIII, to attack Guienne. Henry VIII, flattered by the attentions of Spain, and youthfully anxious to make a name for himself, agreed to join the Holy League.

The outcome of this was a fruitless expedition to Guienne in 1511, and the more successful campaign of 1513, in which Terouenne and Tournai were taken and the battle of the Spurs won. Another result was the battle of Flodden, where the Scots, faithful as usual to their French alliance, invaded England and were completely routed. We may leave the details of the battle



to a later chapter, merely noting now the reason of its occurrence. Then, however, as Henry saw that he was being left to do all the work, while Ferdinand and Maximilian reaped the rewards, he withdrew from the alliance.

It is this turn of policy which marks the advent of Wolsey. So far, all had been of the old fashion—an attempt to recover the lost lands in Guienne, a war against the old rival, France, accompanied as usual by Thomas Wolsey and his new policy. an irruption of the old enemy, Scotland, over the borders. In the diplomacy and in the preparations for war Wolsey had made a sudden great reputation. Fellow of Magdalen, Oxford, rector of Lymington, chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, royal chaplain to Henry VII, he found in the new king a master who gave him work and rewarded the vigour with which he performed it. In gratitude for Wolsey's efforts to fit out the expedition of 1513 Henry made him Bishop of Tournai, and in the next year Bishop of Lincoln. More important still, he gave him his confidence. Thus a new steersman stood at the wheel and gave a totally unexpected turn to it. He abandoned the policy of opposing France, and determined to turn that country into an ally.

Henry was already angry with Maximilian and Ferdinand, and readily agreed to Wolsey's schemes. The chance soon came. Louis XII's queen died: he was looking out for The French alliance. a new bride. With the utmost secrecy Wolsey negotiated a match between him and Henry VIII's youngest sister, Mary. That the king was fifty-two and the bride seventeen was, of course, not worth considering by a statesman. Questions of personal feeling did not weigh beside strokes of diplomacy. And the stroke was a master-stroke. Not only did it show that England, hitherto a blunderer in diplomacy, had a diplomatist to the full as subtle, silent, and speedy as any Spaniard or Italian; but by allying England with France it checkmated the Holy League; it marked the beginning of a complete change in policy, a policy which by degrees became established as traditional, namely to treat *Spain* as England's rival and encounter her power at sea and in the New World.

The eventual results were clear and of great consequence;

on the other hand, the immediate results were confused and unaccompanied by any very tangible advantage. To put it in another way, Wolsey's statesmanship only became clear as the century rolled on. For the present it was obscured by his diplomacy. And as diplomacy has to deal immediately with events as they arise, it often conveys the impression of being vacillating and opportunist. Since the first result of Wolsey's abandonment of the Holy League for a French alliance was to demonstrate how important England might be in European politics, the object of all diplomatists was to secure England's friendship. Thrown into one side of the balance or the other, England's weight would be decisive. Wolsey saw that the best and indeed the only way of preserving this position of authority was to keep, or to seem to keep, an open mind. To decide firmly for one side or the other was to lose the power of decision. Yet, while Wolsey's policy at times swayed between France and Spain, on the whole, at each important crisis, he turned towards France as the better ally.

If we summarize the course of events we shall see this more clearly. His first stroke, the marriage of Mary with Louis XII. was robbed of its value by the death of Louis in 1515. His successor, Francis I, an ambitious young man, immediately plunged into war to regain the duchy of Milan, and defeated the Swiss allies of the duke at Marignano. Europe again grew alarmed lest France should grow too strong. In the next year Ferdinand died, and his grandson Charles became his heir.

The passing of  
the old men—  
Louis XII, 1515  
Ferdinand, 1516  
Maximilian, 1519.

uniting under his rule an alarming mass of territory—<sup>1516.</sup> Burgundy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sicily. Again Wolsey met this danger with a French alliance, and confirmed it with the pledge of Henry's infant daughter Mary to the Dauphin. With great skill he negotiated a Universal Peace, in which the Pope, the Emperor, France, Spain, and Scotland joined. Thus he made England appear as supreme arbiter in European politics.

In 1519 came a fresh change with the death of the Emperor Maximilian. Francis and Charles V were both candidates to succeed him: Henry's vanity compelled Wolsey to put his claim forward too, though his chances were never seriously treated.

Eventually Charles was elected, England maintaining a position of neutrality towards both sides in order that each might feel that any unfriendliness might throw Henry into his rival's camp. Each power tried to win Wolsey and the alliance of his royal master, by dangling before him the bait of the Papacy, and promising support at the next vacancy in the Holy See. This phase is marked by the glories of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where Henry held conference with Francis, going straight from there to Calais to interview the Emperor Charles.

All was now in the hands of the young men. Charles of Spain, Francis of France, and Henry of England were much less cautious and wary than Louis XII, Ferdinand, and Maximilian. The problem, too, had been narrowed and intensified, for Maximilian's and Ferdinand's powers had coalesced. There was no longer Spain and the Empire to be considered. They were in one hand; and they lay on either side of France. The rivals, however, could not keep at peace; and Henry, urged by his Spanish wife, by the national connection between England and Flanders in commerce, and by the old-fashioned liking which his nobles had for a war with France, took the side of Spain. Wolsey disapproved, but he could not sway his master. Two campaigns, however, showed that it was easier to plan the reconquest of the lost English provinces than to carry it into effect. It was almost impossible to get money to carry on the war. Parliament would give no supplies. Wolsey's device of a benevolence, under a new and more alluring title of "the Amicable Loan", was met with clamour and even tumult. "My lord," said one of the rioters to the Duke of Norfolk, "since you ask who is our captain, forsooth his name is Poverty, for he and his cousin Necessity have brought us to this doing." In 1525 Francis was defeated and captured at Pavia,<sup>1</sup> and Wolsey had drawn off from the Spanish side. In 1527 the Imperial troops, under the Duke of Bourbon, sacked Rome, and made Pope Clement VII prisoner. Wolsey used the indignation which this outrage on the Pope caused to prepare a fresh French alliance.

The young men.

The sack of Rome.

Close on the heels of this came the trouble of the king's

<sup>1</sup> "Tout est perdu fors l'honneur (et ma vie)."



divorce, leading to Wolsey's fall, and the Reformation. The languid interest which the country had shown in Wolsey's somewhat bewildering diplomacy suddenly sprang into a flame when the old grievance of the papal power in England came to the front. Here must be traced the beginnings of the Reformation.

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## XXIII. The Reformation

### I. The New Learning and the Reformation in Germany

It is almost universally true of the great figures in the world's history that they are partly shaped by the trend of current opinion, and are so far the product of their time: yet more still they react on public opinion, and so shape their time to their own opinions. They are inevitable, and yet totally incalculable. So with Luther. To grasp the significance of his work it is needful to see wherein he merely took up a movement already started, and also how far he gave a new turn to its direction.

When the Turkish pressure on Constantinople dispersed over Europe a multitude of Greek refugees, many of them turned, as did the *émigrés* from France at a much later time, to their one resource for a living—they began to teach their own language. An interest in Greek once stimulated in Italy, there came a demand for Greek writings to read. These would be first the classical writers, and above all Plato. Curiosity once stirred, spread. Classic Greek revived classic Latin; and the Italian Renaissance took the shape of a classic revival in letters and art. To it the world owes an amazing debt in scholarship, sculpture, literature, painting. But it does not owe the Reformation. The Italian phase of the New Learning was an artistic and scholarly temper of mind, but it had little that was practical about it. Cosimo and Lorenzo dei

Medici's band of scholars at Florence—where were brought up Michael Angelo and Ficino the Platonist scholar, the brilliant Pico della Mirandola, who was at twenty-three the greatest linguist of his time, and Poliziano, the most cultured poet of the age—lived in a joyous atmosphere of scholarly intercourse “seasoned with delightful talk and wit”; yet when there appeared in Florence Girolamo Savonarola, the one scholar who was in earnest about putting the new ideas into practice, the Florentines could only give him the fleeting interest that they gave at that time to all brilliant novelties, and eventually looked on without much protest when Pope Alexander VI had him burned. The Florentine school loved words but not deeds. It was the same at Rome when the newly-founded “Roman Academy” became so intensely classical that some members even aped a revival of paganism, and induced the Pope to imprison them, till he became convinced that they were so entirely trivial, that the Church could afford to pass them over with contempt. He was right so far as Italy was concerned. The spirit of the New Learning there showed no signs of being practical. It would study, comment, and criticize; but it would do nothing.

Yet in Italy as elsewhere through Europe there was much that needed doing. While the New Learning was rekindling Italian scholarship, the Church, as illustrated by its leaders the popes, seemed to be decaying in morals and influence. Even so honest and well-meaning a pope as Pius II could not raise a spark of real enthusiasm in his attempt to stir Europe once more to drive back the Turks. The days of crusading zeal were past. Gradually, from 1470 onwards, the popes slipped into what was going on around them. They became Italian princes, seeking to build up for the Church a strong principality at the expense of their neighbours by the usual methods of the statecraft of the time, intrigue and violence. Sixtus IV began this “secularization of the Papacy”. His successor, Innocent VIII, was a lazy and incapable man, and his private life was scandalous. In this he was eclipsed by his successor, Rodrigo Borgia, Alexander VI, who was suspected, with good reason, of using poison to gain his political ends, and whose son, Cesare Borgia, was, during his

Decline of the  
Papacy, 1470.

papal father's life, the most notorious villain in Italy. Julius II, the next<sup>1</sup> pope, was not a nepotist, nor greedy for his family, but his ambition to enlarge the Papal States kept Italy distracted with war during his whole papacy. Leo X (1513), of whom little was known save his youth and good nature, was chosen in the hope that he would give rest from the intolerable political activity that had marked the last two pontificates.

Still, the manifold abuses of the time, the emptiness of the Papacy, the alliance that was growing closer between the Church and the world, the aloofness that prevailed between religion and life, the gap that was widening between the new learning and the old theology, caused no real troublings of heart in Italy. Italy had acquiesced for so long in the position and claims of the medieval Church, as embodied in the papal system, that it believed this to be as enduring as the sun in the firmament. The scholars despised the churchmen a little, as being ignorant and unenlightened, but they accepted the Papacy and its ways with a shrug of the shoulders. The Papacy, in its turn, despised the scholars, but tolerated them with the easy confidence with which any ancient institution regards what it imagines to be childish follies. Unfortunately the Papacy's accurate estimate of the Renaissance in Italy only prepared it to misunderstand the movement in England and Germany.

Germany and England had got what Italy had not—a sense that wrong is not the less wrong for being long upheld, and that right, even if new, may still be right. That is the real spirit of the reformer, who, while he feels the night too short in which to learn, realizes still more acutely that the day is too short in which to act. Hence the northerners turned to what they felt to be of real concern in life. In Germany and in England the New Learning was practical. Men felt that learning was barren unless it bore directly upon life. To know better was useless, if it did not lead men to live better and to do better. Thus the scholarship which in Italy worked among the classics turned across the Alps to the field of the New Testament; seed sown here would not fall on stony ground or be choked by the cares of this world, but would bring forth fruit.

New Learning  
in Germany  
and England.

<sup>1</sup> But one. Pius III was Pope for one month.



Two types, then, were characteristic of the New Learning in the north: the theologian, who, while not regardless of tradition and of what men had been taught in the past, yet applied his learning to it to find out what he believed to be the *truth*; secondly, the reformer, who, fearless of power and dignitaries, followed out his conclusions to do what he felt to be *right*. The best examples of these two types are Erasmus and Luther.

Desiderius Erasmus was a Fleming. Left an orphan and pushed into a monastery, he had as a boy acquired an intense dislike for monks and their life, and on coming of age had quitted his monastery. He had studied at Paris Erasmus. and then at Oxford, and later his wanderings included Germany and Italy. Too wide-minded to fall in with either the impractical spirit of the Italian Renaissance, or the theological brawling which was disturbing Germany, his critical mind set others on the path from which he himself ultimately shrunk back. His influence was displayed in two ways. First, in his book, the *Praise of Folly*, he taught the world, and especially the world of scholars, to laugh at the old-fashioned scholastic learning of the monks.<sup>1</sup> Many had in different ages assailed the monks with abuse, and done them on the whole little harm. To the poisoned shafts of Erasmus's wit no effective reply was possible. Yet ridicule of the monks and their opinions naturally resulted in a contempt for their order and their faith; this meant a sapping of one of the buttresses of the Church. But much more important than Erasmus's work as a wit was his work as a critic. He published, in 1516, a complete edition of the Greek Testament, and placed beside the Greek a new Latin translation, in which he corrected what seemed to him to be mistakes, while in notes he expressed freely his ideas upon current beliefs. One example will illustrate the whole. On the text, "Upon this rock I will build my church", he observes that this does not refer only to the Pope, but to all Christians. Methods of this kind would speedily call upon all the claims of the Papacy to justify themselves from the Bible, and would press for their rejection should they fail to do so.

<sup>1</sup> The book was not directed against the monks particularly, but against fools. Erasmus merely found the species plentiful in monasteries.

What Erasmus taught was put into practice by Martin Luther. A peasant by birth, he had entered an Augustinian house at Erfurt, but the life of the cloister gave him no comfort. Martin Luther, He was oppressed with an intense consciousness of inward sin, and this wrestling in his own mind trained in him the practical earnestness and the feeling of a close personal relation between man and God which marked him through life. He left the monastery in 1508, and became a teacher of theology in the new Saxon university of Wittenberg. A visit to Rome which he paid in 1510 revealed to him the depth of carelessness and indifference which pervaded the Papal Court. He set himself more anxiously than ever to study the Bible, in the belief that here was to be found the only remedy against what he called "the reign of slothfulness" which "made the way to heaven so easy that a single sigh suffices". So, when the Dominican friar Tetzel came into Saxony with a commission to grant indulgences (which remitted penances imposed after sin) in return for a gift towards the fund for building St. Peter's in Rome, Luther took fire. There was, he felt, grave danger that simple or careless men would interpret the giving of money in the wrong way; that they would not realize that sin must be atoned for by inward penitence, and that till this was done and absolution granted, charitable and pious actions and gifts, however virtuous, were useless. Accordingly he posted on the church door at Wittenberg a series of theses explaining his views, inviting discussion, and asking for an expression of "the mind of the Pope".

Luther wished to have a discussion on a doubtful point of theology; there was nothing defiant in his attitude at first; discussion of such points was by no means unusual. Luther's quarrel with Rome, But the Papacy had no mind for such a discussion. Doubtless the doctrine of indulgences led to abuses; later, at the Council of Trent, the Church had to condemn "disreputable gains" made by those who desired to obtain them; yet equally certainly the system of indulgences had proved most profitable to the Papacy. To destroy it would throw papal finance into confusion; to meddle with it was dangerous. Accordingly Luther must be bidden to hold his tongue, and be content that what the Church sanctioned was well.

Here came into the issue Luther's personal character and the feelings of the time. Had Luther been fainthearted, he would have subsided into silence. As he was fearless, he persisted; in answering the objections of his opponents he enlarged his own ideas, following without faltering the conclusions which he drew from the study of the Bible and the early fathers of the Church. When commanded again to be silent, he enquired into the Pope's motives for ordering silence, and began to question whether the Pope might not himself be wrong. Other popes had erred. Why not Leo X? That the path was dangerous did not check Luther; that it would end in catastrophe seemed to him inconceivable. No religious reformer ever starts with the design of being a heretic; he only becomes one when he fails to persuade his opponents that it is they who are wrong and not he; and as this is so plain to him, he cannot see why they should fail to grasp it.

Yet Luther's resolution would not have been by itself enough; he would have perished as Huss and Savonarola perished, under a combination of the powers of Pope and Emperor, had not the state of Germany at the time made this <sup>Success of Luther.</sup> combination impossible. The Papacy was particularly unpopular, and even had the Emperor wished to act vigorously on its behalf against Luther, the princes and nobles of the Empire were divided in attitude. The dispute went busily on, and Luther's ideas were listened to with attention. He began to speak also in a way that could be understood. Discarding Latin, the learned language in which till now all theological discussions had been enshrouded, he appealed to the Germans in their own German tongue. And his ideas soon became more extreme. Commenting on the views expressed by an opponent at the Papal Court, he wrote: "When the Romanists see that they cannot prevent a Council, they feign that a Pope is above a Council, is the infallible rule of truth and the author of all understanding of Scripture. There is no remedy save that Emperor, Kings, and Princes should attack these pests and settle the matter, not by words but by the sword." From the attack on persons it is a short step to the attack on doctrine. He wished to sweep away four of the seven sacraments; he held that the liberty of a Christian man is only ruled by his union



to Christ in his kingdom, and therefore free from outward observances.

The one way now to extinguish Luther was to deprive him of support by removing grounds of complaint. This could only be done by making a serious attempt to right abuses and cool down anger by reasonable reform and concession. But concession as a policy does not often commend itself either to Popes, Emperors, or heretics. Luther was condemned at the Diet of Worms in 1521, and the princes of the Empire were adjured to root out his heresy. Some were lukewarm, others vigorous. Where vigour was displayed rebellion sprang up; still, so long as the Pope had the Emperor on his side he might hope that the cause was prospering. But five years later they quarrelled; the Pope had absolved Francis I from keeping the promises Charles had exacted from him after the defeat of Pavia, and accordingly Charles refused to support the Papal cause against the heretics; the imperial policy was reversed; each prince was given liberty to act about Luther "as he thought he could answer to God and the Emperor"—that is to say, as seemed best to his own taste. Immediately after, as if to show how little union there was even among the supporters of the Roman Church, the Imperial troops—a mixture of Spanish Catholics and German Lutherans, led by the French renegade Bourbon—sacked Rome with every conceivable species of horror and blasphemy, and held the Pope imprisoned in his Castle of St. Angelo. In this way Luther was flung about as a shuttlecock in the reckless game of politics, and Germany was left to hopeless religious confusion.

So long an account of the beginnings of the Reformation in Germany may seem out of place in a history of England; yet without a knowledge of what happened in Europe, the cause and the importance of the English Reformation cannot be appreciated. Luther had hit the Papacy hard and in a weak spot; the blow had been much applauded; by writing in German he had appealed to the people at large; what is more, he had survived. This was a large measure of success. Yet one thing he lacked. Some German princes had favoured him, but none had openly taken up his cause. No powerful state had put his

views into practice by rejecting the authority of the Pope. This momentous step was first taken by England. Here is the reason why the English Reformation was an event of paramount importance not only in our land, but over the length and breadth of Europe.

## 2. The Reformation in England: the Breach with Rome

English scholars had been as zealous as the Germans in seeking the New Learning, and had sought it in the same practical spirit. Grocyn studied at Florence, and came back to lecture at Oxford in 1491. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, had, like Erasmus, valued his Greek most because by it he could unlock the treasures of the Gospels: he had unhesitatingly set aside the learning of the schoolmen, as being barren or misleading, and based his teaching on the literal words of the New Testament. In his foundation of St. Paul's Grammar School he gave clear proof of his aims, by causing to be placed over the master's chair in his new school the image of the child Christ, with the words, "Hear ye him". Erasmus himself taught at Cambridge, and inspired Latimer and Fisher with his ideas. In brilliance of wit and in seriousness of mind he found a rival in his own friend, Thomas More. More's book, *Utopia*, describing the ideal land of "No-where", was far in advance of its time in its wide and tolerant principles. He pictures a commonwealth where the aim of law was the good of its members; where all were free to worship as they pleased "because it is not in a man's power to believe as he list"; where none were poor, because goods were held in common, yet all had to work because work was necessary to human wellbeing; where the sovereign was removable "on suspicion of a design to enslave his people"; where all children were taught: and where the punishment for crime was so to be ordered to make the criminal "ever after live a true and honest man". This foreshadows all that the modern state has striven after and a good deal that it has not yet attained. No book shows so well

The Reform  
movement in  
England.

as *Utopia* how the human soul may leap forward out of the trammels of its time. Yet though More, Colet, and the "Greeks" at either University struggled against the "Trojans", who still clung to the old teaching and the old ideas, they could make little practical progress in the real task of reform by themselves. Till the King or Wolsey would stir, nothing could be done, and both were for the present immersed in foreign diplomacy.

Wolsey's failure. Wolsey, it is true, saw the need for reform, but the moment was not propitious, and he was too busy ever to find a time. Being Cardinal-Legate he had the power to deal with the Church, but he put off doing it. His few efforts were cautious and prudent, but cautious reformers satisfy neither side. The doom of Laodicea clings to them. They alarm and irritate those who hold to the old system, while the hot reformers condemn them as triflers. Even Wolsey's suppression of a few decrepit monasteries, and the establishment of "Cardinal College"<sup>1</sup> at Oxford, was turned to his reproof. The clerical party saw in him a false friend; the nobles only saw him striving after his own vainglory.

Yet though the strong hands that held England gave no opportunity to the Reformers, such as was offered in feeble and disunited Germany, yet there was fuel ready should the torch be applied. Since the days of Edward III and Richard II. Englishmen had vigorously resented Papal interference. The statutes of Provisors and Præmunire<sup>2</sup> had expressed the popular dislike of the Papacy's thrusting intruders into English benefices, or attempting to enforce its decrees in England. However, the

"grim two-handed engine at the door"

stood rusty, but ready. Should cause of affront be given, the King would find his people united supporters against Rome. And the great source of Henry's power was that he was so completely an Englishman of his time. He understood his subjects and they him. So far he had no quarrel with the Papacy; he heartily condemned Luther, and had caused to be published in his own name a confutation of that heretic which Pope Clement had rewarded with the gift of the Golden Rose

<sup>1</sup> Now Christ Church.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 192.



and the title of "Fidei Defensor"—a title which still figures on our coinage. But Henry had no deep-grounded respect for the Papacy. Were Popes complaisant, Henry was correspondingly gracious; should differences arise, Henry's zeal would cool; and in 1526 the cause of quarrel was not far off. Henry was tiring of his wife Katherine.

It must be admitted that Henry and Katherine had little to hold them together. Being a Spaniard, she had disliked the French alliance to which Henry, under Wolsey's guidance, had turned so frequently, and she had The King's divorce. pestered the King with more zeal than wisdom. Henry on his side was disappointed that she had borne him no son to follow him, and secure the succession; each grew cool towards the other, and Henry found her companionship more and more distasteful. But his ideas were suddenly turned in the direction of a divorce by the fact that he fell violently in love with a lady of the court named Anne Boleyn. To win Anne, it was needful to get rid of Katherine; once more Henry turned to Wolsey for help. A technical ground was not far to seek. Katherine had been his brother Arthur's widow; hence the marriage had been illegal but for a dispensation from the Pope; the King's conscience now became convinced that the dispensation was wrong; could not his marriage be declared null and void? Popes had done greater things for monarchs than this.

Wolsey did not oppose the idea: perhaps he even suggested it to Henry; he would be glad to be rid of Katherine and her Spanish views. But though he hoped the Pope might be persuaded, yet there were many difficulties. Nothing could be said against Katherine, who was of most Difficulties in the way of Wolsey. virtuous character. England would probably sympathize with her, especially when the real object, namely, that Henry should marry Anne, had leaked out. Both France and Spain would oppose it—France, because Henry's daughter, Mary, was betrothed to the Dauphin, and such action would leave her illegitimate; Spain, because Charles V was Katherine's nephew. And in 1527, when the affair was being cautiously broached, came the sack of Rome, which left Pope Clement at Charles V's mercy. No more inauspicious moment could be

chosen for trying to persuade the Pope to offer the Spanish king a deadly affront. No wonder that Wolsey hesitated.

Things went as he expected. Neither Spain nor France gave him any help. Clement put things off, then appointed Wolsey and Cardinal Campeggio to hear the cause in England, but did not give them the power of final decision. Campeggio reached England in October, but the trial did not begin till the following June. Its verdict was expected in July, but at the end of that month Campeggio declared the sitting adjourned for two months more. This renewed delay made Henry furious.

Here was revealed what had been hitherto but dimly seen. The real master of England was after all not Wolsey but Henry; and Henry showed the quality which Wolsey lacked—determination, and disregard of tradition and consequence which might stand in his way. Hence, while men were waiting for the cautious Wolsey to find his way round this thicket of political thorns, Henry, like a bull, burst through it.

He threw over Wolsey, and directed his attorney to sue for a writ of *præmunire* against his minister, on the ground that, acting as Papal Legate, he had broken the statute. The Fall of Wolsey. charge was iniquitous, since Wolsey had obtained his legatine authority at the King's own pressing desire, in order to use it for the King. But that, he knew, would not save him. He made instant and humble submission, acknowledging that all his goods were most justly forfeit to his "most merciful" master. Henry seized his goods, deprived him of the Great Seal, and dismissed him to his see of York. He probably was not quite sure that he might not want him again. Wolsey's enemies, however, were too strong; the Cardinal was arrested at York for high treason, and dispatched southwards to the Tower. Death, however, was more merciful than the King: broken-hearted, feeble, and despairing, Wolsey struggled to Leicester, and there died. Henry's last act was to send instructions to an envoy straitly to question his old servant on his deathbed as to what he had done with £1500 which he had scraped together after his fall, the last remnant of that abundant wealth which had been spent for the King, or seized by him.

Two steps which the King took close on Wolsey's fall are

most significant of the future. He issued writs for the summoning of a Parliament, and he appointed Sir Thomas More to succeed Wolsey as Chancellor. Parliament save for one brief session had not met for fourteen years; it was much longer since a King had entrusted his conscience to a layman's keeping.<sup>1</sup> But both signs point the same way: the sway of the Church in politics was tottering, the "minister" and the layman were rising to take its place. Wolsey is the last "Eminence" in that long chain of ecclesiastical statesmen that tower through English history from Dunstan onwards. None of them, great as they were, o'er-tops Wolsey. Yet with the suddenness of a precipitous fall the chain breaks off and is submerged. Far off in the sea of time one mitred head will rise again above the political waters: that is Laud; but he is lonely in history, out of place and out of date.

The seven years from 1529 till 1536 during which this Parliament sat, saw the breach between Henry and Rome widen year by year into a yawning gulf. Each step in the quarrel is marked by a fresh inroad of Parliament on the position of the Church. Thus this "Reformation" Parliament is not unlike the Long Parliament. Each came after a prolonged period of unparliamentary government which may be called "tyranny". Each sat for what was for its age an extraordinary number of sessions; each, by an odd coincidence, assembled on the same day. The one tore the Papal authority to tatters, as its successor tore the Royal power. There is one crucial difference: the Long Parliament worked of its own force; the Reformation Parliament owed its vigour to the King. Henry, as it were, having roused the national watchdog from its slumber by a series of thumps on its kennel, urges it against a trespasser; yet grasps the angry beast by its collar, pretending to his enemy that he cannot hold it back much longer, while privily stirring it to a more terrifying show of fury.

The first attack fell on a vulnerable point — the pocket. Hitherto the clergy and the Church had been in the habit of getting large fees from the probate of wills, and from "corse presents" (mortuary fees, paid when a dead body was taken through a parish); some of the clergy had made money by

<sup>1</sup> The Chancellor is "the Keeper of the King's Conscience".



farming and trading; all these sources of revenue were docked. Many of the clergy had held more than one benefice; these "pluralities" were now forbidden, as was the practice of non-residence, unless special leave was granted by the King. Hitherto this leave had been granted by the Pope. Here was the first grasp of the royal hand that was to tighten round the clergy.

In the second session all the clergy were entangled in the mesh that had snared Wolsey, the penalties of *Præmunire*.

Wolsey was guilty, and so were they—of obedience. *Præmunire*.

The Convocation of Canterbury hastily bought their pardon with a gift of £100,000, York followed with £18,000. Under the law the laity were involved too, but the King graciously pardoned the rest of his subjects wholesale—for nothing—"of his benignity, special grace, pity, and liberality" as the Act of Parliament put it.

Ere the next session came round the King's agents had been busy at Rome, but had made no progress over the annulling of the King's marriage. Consequently Parliament gave *Act of Annates*.

another turn to the screw by the Act of Annates: "albeit the King and all his subjects be as obedient, devout, catholic, and humble children of Holy Church as any people with any realm Christian", yet the payment of annates (the firstfruits of a benefice) to the Pope was henceforth to cease;<sup>1</sup> any bishop who paid them should forfeit lands and goods to the King: and if in consequence of the act the Pope were to refuse the bull confirming the election of a new bishop, the bishop should be appointed by two of his brethren without waiting for the Pope's consent. But as King and Parliament did not wish to use violence "before gentle courtesy first attempted", the King was to have the power of declaring whether the Act should be put in force.

But if nothing could be got from Rome, Henry was ready to do without Rome. In the spring of 1532 Cranmer, fortified by the favourable opinions of some universities, which *Act of Appeals*, had been consulted at his own suggestion, was busy over Katherine's divorce. To nullify her certain appeal to Rome, Parliament stepped in with the Act of Appeals forbidding all

<sup>1</sup> They did not lapse altogether: an Act of 1534 bestowed them on the Crown.

appeals to Rome in matters of will, marriage, or divorce, either for the future or already entered on: henceforth the appeal was to go to the Upper House of Convocation. Henry could control that.

By the time Parliament met for its fifth session the divorce had been granted, and the marriage with Anne publicly acknowledged. Matters having been driven to this extreme point, Parliament was still bolder. For the first time it spoke of the Pope as "the Bishop of Rome otherwise called the Pope"; arranged that bishops for the future were to be elected by the dean and chapter of the diocese under a royal writ called the *congé d'élire*, but that they must elect the person named by the King in the writ—conferring a liberty with one hand and taking it back with the other. Peter's-pence, and every other payment made to Rome were lopped off. No church ordinances were to be made save by the King's consent. Yet in case the Pope should even at the eleventh hour repent, Henry was again empowered to suspend or enforce these acts at his pleasure. Further, by the First Royal Succession Act the marriage with Katherine was declared null, and Katherine's daughter Mary cut out of the succession.

Between the fifth and sixth sessions the Pope annulled Cranmer's sentence of divorce; whereon the King retorted with a Royal Proclamation ordering all manner of prayers, mass-books, and rubrics "wherein the Act of Supremacy. Bishop of Rome is named or his presumptuous proud pomp preferred", to be abolished, "and his name and memory to be never more remembered". Parliament followed this up with the Act of Supremacy declaring the King to be the supreme Head of the Church of England, and an oath was exacted calling on men to refuse all obedience to any foreign authority, and to accept all Acts made by the present parliament. For refusing to take this oath the Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, and Bishop Fisher were imprisoned.

The seventh and last session saw the overthrow of the smaller monasteries. As the King had now absorbed all the ecclesiastical powers which the Pope had formerly wielded in England, he had become visitor of the religious houses, which had hitherto

been under the control only of the officers of their own order, and of the Pope. They were soon to learn what a visitation meant. All of less annual value than £200 were suppressed, and their lands forfeited to the King. With this last blow delivered the Reformation Parliament ended.

Looking at its work as a whole two things emerge. To begin with, there never was a Reformation so completely mundane. It was political and nothing else. The only sense in which it was partially religious is that it was sacrilegious. Starting with a determination to make the worse appear the better reason over the divorce, King and Parliament proceeded coldly and methodically to bring the Church to heel, rout the Pope, and scatter his allegiance. Neither justice nor sentiment were allowed to interfere with business. The war has no parade of powers, and no thunder of heavy ordnance on the English side at any rate. Each stroke fell on the enemy's supplies; slowly, bloodlessly, but inexorably he was starved out—in the cause of conscience. That it could be done in this way is proof that as a whole the nation agreed. Rome and its authority were disliked heartily: most would echo the words of his grace of Suffolk, "England was never merry while we had Cardinals among us". A clearance had been needed and was now made. As to what would come next the bulk of Englishmen did not trouble their heads.

Secondly, we must observe that the Reformation Parliament, which had overthrown the Pope, raised the Crown to a height unmatched before or since in English history. Besides conveying to himself all the Papal powers and much of the Church's property, Henry had been permitted to enforce statutes or not as seemed good to him; the succession had been practically left in his hands; he was armed with a new Treason Act which made even *thought* against him treasonable. Bulky as he was, he was every inch a Prince.

These two qualities of the Reformation Parliament's work are reflected from the man who, under Henry, had most to do with the shaping of it. Thomas Cromwell was a lawyer who had grown rich by moneylending, had sat in the House

Dissolution of  
the smaller  
monasteries.

Thomas  
Cromwell.



of Commons, and had served Wolsey. But he was essentially a King's man at heart: not a Cardinal's. His early days of adventure in Italy had made him familiar with despotic power ruthlessly exercised, and he halted at nothing to make the king supreme. As "Vicar General" under the Act of Supremacy, he devised the measures which brought the Church under the King. He restricted even the right of preaching to those who held royal licenses, forced the clergy to preach in favour of the Act of Supremacy, overthrew first the smaller monasteries and then the larger, turned over their property to the Crown, and swept out of his way all opposition. Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, the foremost scholar and the most saintly bishop of the day, were executed for refusing to accept the Act of Supremacy. The monks of the Charterhouse were hanged in a batch on the same charge, or left to die in chains in Newgate. When the dissolution of the smaller monasteries provoked the north to rebellion, Cromwell never faltered. This "Pilgrimage of Grace", as the rebellion was called, was dangerous enough, for it was inspired by very genuine religious alarm. More firmly Catholic than the south, less ready for the new ideas, men believed that the attack on the monasteries would be followed by an onslaught on the churches. The rebels, led by Robert Aske, took as their banner the Five Wounds of Christ, and demanded that the monasteries should be restored, the reforming bishops turned out, and Cromwell banished. This last aim brought in the northern nobles, for Cromwell was looked on with mingled loathing and fear by the old nobility, as an upstart venomous snake. The Percies, Lords Westmorland and Latimer, Earl Dacre of Yorkshire, all joined; and these could bring the fiercest fighting men in England with them. Abbots and priors all gathered to the cause; the Abbot of Barlings rode up in full armour. Henry sent Norfolk to meet the rebels; but as he was too weak to fight, bade him make terms. He was only waiting his time; the rebels dispersed, but renewed rioting soon after gave Henry and Cromwell the excuse for revoking all that they had yielded. The leaders were seized; Lord Darcy, Lord Hussey, and the Abbots of four great monasteries were all hanged. Lesser rebels shared the same fate in dozens throughout the

Pilgrimage  
of Grace.

north. It was a stern lesson in what the Royal Supremacy meant.

This failure of the "Pilgrimage of Grace" led to the downfall of the greater monasteries. Some were forfeited for treason; others found it wisest to submit to the king. The greater monasteries. The monks were pensioned. Six of the great monasteries were refounded as secular chapters round the six new bishoprics; a little of the property was used for schools; a little for erecting fortresses on the coast. But the bulk of it went to the king; and he dispersed most of it—some by gift to his ministers and courtiers, much by sale—so that in a few years it had passed into many hands, and thus afforded an effectual guarantee that the Reformation would be permanent. If England were to submit again to Rome, that land would have to be restored; and in the course of a few years it was so parcelled up that 40,000 families were reckoned to have an interest in it, and these 40,000 would be sturdy Protestants. It was on this rock that Mary's schemes for restoring Roman influence shipwrecked. To take this land back by force was impossible; she had not money to buy it back; and it remained a bulwark of the Reformation, just as the National Debt of money borrowed by William III and George I proved a bulwark of the Revolution Settlement. Alike in each age, visionaries plotted for a restoration of the Old Faith or the House of Stuart; but sound moneyed men, with an eye on their estates or their funds, looked askance on schemes that menaced "property".

The remainder of Henry VIII's reign bears no very marked characteristic, either of progress or reaction. Some men deplored what had been done; others felt that a halt had been called too soon. Those in front cried "forward", and those behind cried "back". Yet both these were small parties; the bulk of the nation was for the time quite satisfied, and the king, who adequately represented the bulk, was satisfied too. Hence not much was done, and that leaned now to one side and now to the other.

The chief forward step was taken in the translation of the Bible. Most of the copies of Tyndale's version, printed abroad

and smuggled into England, had been destroyed. Miles Coverdale was encouraged by Cromwell to make a new translation; this was combined in 1537 with Tyndale's work by John Rogers; who published it under the assumed name of Matthew. The king was persuaded to license it; and Cranmer having written a preface for it, the "Great Bible" was placed in the churches. Private persons were also allowed to have copies. Although in 1543 the liberty of reading the Bible was withdrawn from "husbandmen, workmen, and women except gentlewomen", yet in 1544 the Litany and in 1545 services for morning and evening prayer were issued in English.

While the Bible was thus placed in the hands of the people, no encouragement was given to depart from the old faith. Opposed to Cranmer and the Reformers in doctrine stood the Duke of Norfolk, leader of the nobles; Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester; Bonner, Bishop of London; and, above all, Henry himself. Their attitude is expressed in the statute of Six Articles (1539), which was intended as a dam to the rising tide of the Reformation. It enjoined (1) a belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation; (2) the practice of communion in one kind; (3) the illegality of the marriage of the clergy; (4) the necessity of keeping vows of chastity; (5) the continuance of private masses; (6) the use of confession. It will be seen that these maintain a great part of the essentials of the old faith. The first was, of course, the stronghold of the Roman doctrine and the point of attack of all the Reformers: on it, too, rested much of the authority of the priests, and this aloofness of the priesthood was to be maintained by Articles 3 and 4. Their authority over the consciences of their flock was upheld by the continuance of confession. Article 2 was intended to clear England from a share in the old Bohemian heresy now revived in Germany. Having added the penalty of death for the first infraction of the first article, and for the second breach of any of the others, Parliament felt comfortably assured that under no circumstances could those who kept the Six Articles be accused of being heretics.

This extremely definite declaration against any attempt to change doctrine was followed by the downfall of Cromwell. In



1539 he had wished to strengthen the Protestant princes in Germany by an English alliance, and had persuaded the king to promise to marry Anne, sister of the Duke of Cleves. Fall of Cromwell, 1539. The alliance broke down; but Henry, who had now been wifeless for four years, determined to keep his promise. Anne had been represented to him as beautiful; she was, however, exceedingly plain, and though Henry manfully went through with the marriage, he at once procured a divorce from his "Flanders mare". He showed his annoyance with Cromwell; and Cromwell's enemies, the nobles with Norfolk at their head, at once turned on him. He was attainted on an absurd charge of treason and executed (1540).

Little calls for notice between 1540 and 1547. The war with Scotland falls in its place in the chapter of Scottish history. The king married twice more: first, Catharine Howard, and then, after her execution for misconduct, Catharine Parr. In order to make it easier for the government to pay its debts, the coinage was much debased; but the effects of that measure belong to the reign of Edward VI. Almost the last thing that the king did was to cause the Earl of Surrey (Norfolk's son) to be put to death for aiming at the Crown.

So the reign ended as it had begun—with the headsman's axe: and in truth this political engine, with its less dignified helpmeet the halter, is so prominent that we are tempted at first to think the reign particularly blood-stained. It did not present that aspect to men of its own time. After the long-drawn-out disorders of the Wars of the Roses, and the nervous dread of their revival in Henry VII's day, Henry VIII's time was a period of peace and prosperity. The old enemy Rome was routed, England was "merry", and "good King Harry" popular even to the end. He was neither merciful, nor logical, nor faithful, nor grateful. But he knew what he wanted and what England wanted, and he took the first and gave the second without scruple of conscience.

### 3. Edward VI and the Premature Reform in Doctrine

Henry, empowered by Parliament to settle the succession in his will, left the throne first to his son Edward; if he died without an heir, the crown was to go to his daughter Mary; if her line failed, to Elizabeth; and finally, The succession. to the descendants of his younger sister, Mary. It will be noticed that Henry's presage of the failure of descendants came true; but his will was not completely carried out, for the crown in the end passed to the descendants of his elder sister, the Scottish line, which he passed over.

Meanwhile, as Edward was only nine, a Regency was inevitable, and everything would turn on the political and religious ideas of the Regency. Henry had nominated a council, with men of different shades of opinion included in it, in the hope that it would do nothing but maintain things as they were. Yet here again Henry's plans failed, for the young king's Somerset, the Protector. uncle, Seymour, managed to win over to his side part of the council, and got himself declared Lord Protector of the Realm. With their help, and adding to himself the title of the Duke of Somerset, he prepared to put his ideas into practice.

Several serious dangers lay ahead of him; opportunities which might be taken, but which if neglected would prove fatal. To begin with, there was a growing party desirous of further change in religion, some of them genuinely Social and religious troubles. anxious for a complete form of Protestantism, others merely greedy for further plunder of property devoted to religious uses. This party, though prominent, was small; large masses of the country, especially in the conservative north and west, were opposed to any meddling with their old faith. Besides religious trouble there was serious economic distress. Ever since the Black Death the process of converting corn land into pasture, often by driving off the old manorial tenants,<sup>1</sup> had been busily pressed. As sheep-farming employed fewer men, there

<sup>1</sup> See p. 188.

were many left without work. This distress was aggravated by the dissolution of the monasteries. The monks had been old-fashioned lords, often well content with old ways. The new owners of the monastery lands were active "improvers", with no respect for custom or old tenants. And where distress had existed the monasteries had done something to relieve it. Further trouble was caused by Henry's debased coin, for money no longer circulated at its face value; when men were in doubt whether a shilling was worth a shilling or only sixpence, all business transactions were upset, and the evil tended to grow. Not all the coin was bad; but men naturally were unwilling to part with good shillings when they got them, and strove to pay away the bad coins. The good money was hoarded, or even melted down for the sake of the silver, and the bad money took its place. Thus, with doubt and division in religious matters, widespread distress in agriculture, and confusion in all business transactions, the new Lord Protector would have his hands full. Another important, though less urgent question, would also demand attention—that of the young king's marriage. In all these matters Somerset failed, the more lamentably since, though he was an enlightened and honest man, the goodness of his ideas was quite obscured by the badness of the methods which he employed to carry them out. In aims his policy was admirable, in results purely disastrous.

At the outset he had an opportunity which had not been given to any English statesman since Edward I—the chance to join England and Scotland by a royal marriage. Mary Queen of Scots, the little orphaned daughter of James V, was the obvious future bride for young Edward VI. Scotland being divided between a French Catholic party, headed by the Queen-mother, Mary of Guise, and an "English" party, who favoured a Reformation, Somerset's plain duty was to take care not to unite these parties in the one thing in which they could be united, namely, in a common hatred of England. This, however, he at once proceeded to do. Finding that his scheme of betrothal was not at once kindly received, he marched an army into Scotland which utterly defeated the Scots at Pinkie Cleugh (1547). This was

Somerset's  
Scottish  
policy.



not the way to win Scotland. Huntly put the Scottish feeling into memorable words: "I mislike not the match, but the manner of the wooing". The little queen was sent over to France, where she was shortly affianced to the Dauphin. Somerset's hasty violence had ruined his own plans.

In religious matters he acted just as rashly. Convinced that England was ready to go much further with the Reformation, he ordered the abolishing of the mass and the use of Latin in the service, and sent commissioners round the country to pull down the images in the churches and destroy the pictures on the walls. As some of the commissioners' servants carried out these orders in an offensive way, parading the streets dressed as mock-priests, and burning the pictures with the same sort of spirit as a later generation burnt effigies of Guy Fawkes, this caused intense anger in all the old-fashioned parts of the country. For time out of mind generation after generation had used the same service, and, whether they understood it or not, had treasured it as the sacred ground whereon men may approach to the presence of God; unnumbered prayers had been uttered before images which helped dull minds to contemplate their Redeemer and the saints; sacred pictures had hallowed and beautified churches, and had grown to be loved for the permanence of the blessed hopes they had given to one sorrowful heart after another. Now all were rudely swept away, and to the simple country folk it seemed as if the gateway of heaven had been closed, and new prison-houses with white-washed walls put in the place of the many mansions of the blest on earth.

Abolition  
of images  
in churches.

On minds still in bewilderment, seeking reasons for this change, fell another blow, but this time chiefly on the towns. The old guilds, so common in every town, were almost as familiar in men's lives as their religion. They had had many objects: some, such as the regulation of trades, declining in value; some taking the shape of festivities and miracle plays, more amusing perhaps than useful; some chiefly religious in aim; others, however, were of great practical use. Were a guildsman sick or in distress, he looked to his guild for aid; if his tools were stolen or his house burnt, his guild

Forfeiture  
of guild  
property.

helped him. If he died in poverty, his guild buried him, educated his children, looked after his widow, and paid for masses for the repose of his soul. If a man wished to leave money or lands in charity, he left it to his guild, and, as this form of bequest was common, many of the guilds were rich. The greedy eye of the Government fell on them; they, like the monasteries, held much property devoted to religious uses in the shape of masses for the dead; in some respects, too, they might be described as effete. And so an act was passed confiscating their property. The effect was something as if at the present day the Government were to seize the property of all benefit societies, sick clubs, and workmen's friendly societies. Here again was a measure angering and injuring masses of poor men, all the more offensive because the London guilds were spared, being, it may be supposed, too dangerous to molest.

Trouble was not long in coming. Somerset's brother, Lord Seymour of Sudely, first plotted a rebellion. He had married Henry VIII's widow, Catharine Parr, and sought to make for himself a position like that of Warwick the Kingmaker. He coined money and forged cannon in his own foundries, fortified Holt Castle, and intrigued against the Protector. The Council dealt with him by act of attainder, and had him executed; but the treasonable schemes of so near a relation did Somerset no good. Next came further proof of the Protector's failure in the

Risings in  
Devonshire  
and Norfolk.

shape of two insurrections, which burst out at the same time in the west and in the east, and here once more Somerset's incapacity was made plain.

The insurrection in the west, where men were still mainly Catholic in faith, was entirely religious in character; it was caused by the New Prayer Book of 1549, which had been put in place of the old service. In the eastern counties there was no religious discontent, for Norfolk and the east, owing partly to immigrants from the Low Countries, was strongly Protestant. Rebellion here sprang from social causes: the enclosures of commons and arable land for the purpose of sheep-farming had thrown many out of work; the debased coinage had upset all manufacturers and all workmen, all wages and all prices; in Norwich and the towns men were indignant at the confiscation

of the guilds. Thus at the same moment the most widely severed parts of the country, the poorest and the richest—the backward, agricultural, Catholic west, and the progressive, manufacturing Protestant east—were each driven to rebellion.

There is only one thing which a Government can do with rebellion, and that is to put it down. Inquiry into the reasons for it, sympathy with men misled into it, remedy for the causes of it, can only come after, namely, when the rebels have laid down arms and become once more citizens. This the well-meaning Somerset did not see. For the Devonshire rebels, in arms for their old religion, he had no sympathy and no mercy. It was indeed some time before he had the upper hand of them. Through the summer of 1549 the west was in a flame; 10,000 men, under Pomeroy and Arundel, in arms; the mass everywhere celebrated; and Exeter besieged. So instant was the danger that a body of German mercenaries had to be taken into the Government service. These under Lord Grey de Wilton met the rebels at St. Mary Clyst and Sampford Courtenay, and, with every advantage of arms and discipline, had hard work to overcome them. No such fighting had been seen in England since the battle of Stoke. Some four thousand were killed in these fierce combats, and at the end the leaders were hanged at Tyburn, and so order was restored.

So stern in the west, where German firelocks were turned against English peasants, Somerset in the east was mild to the point of feebleness. With the great body of rebels, who, under their leaders Robert and William Ket, encamped on Mousehold Hill, outside Norwich, dominating the town, and levying provisions from the gentry round about, he felt some sympathy, for he had realized himself the evils of the enclosures and of the bad money, and meant in time to mend them. Hence he tried to make terms. This only encouraged the rebels to remain under arms. Inevitably, fighting began between them and the neighbouring gentry, and the Council naturally turned from Somerset to a stronger man. They ordered the Earl of Warwick to attack the rebels, which he did with great vigour, slaughtering a number and dispersing the rest.

With this reputation as a man of energy, Warwick turned to



overthrow Somerset. The Protector's failures had been many; his rivals in the Council were jealous of him; he had no strong party behind him. In 1551 he submitted to the Council, and was sent to the Tower; pardoned, for the time, he was restored to his place in the Council; but Warwick feared him too much to leave him in peace, and in January, 1552, he was executed on a charge of conspiracy.

So fell Somerset, one of those tragic failures, an honest and well-meaning man, whose real fault was that he was in advance of his time. Misled into thinking that the opinions round him in London and at court were held throughout the country, mistaken in his belief that the nation, which under Henry VIII had thrown off the yoke of Rome with such enthusiasm, was really anxious for a reform in doctrine, rash in his changes, yet, in spite of his failures, many in England loved him. At his execution those near the scaffold dipped handkerchiefs in his blood to treasure as relics of a good man. He was, after all, honest, which is more than can be said for the man who followed him.

At the date of Somerset's death Edward VI was nearly fifteen. All had the highest hopes of him. He was intensely popular, as his father had been as a young man. Those round Edward VI. him at court knew his ability, his earnestness, and his sincere Protestantism. The nation looked forward to the rule of a king who would sweep away all the failures of the Regency. "When he comes of age," cried an enthusiastic Hampshire squire, "he will hang up an hundred heretic knaves." Probably such methods would not have overmuch distressed a king who noted coldly in his diary his uncle's death thuswise: "This day the Duke of Somerset had his head cut off between eight and nine o'clock in the morning." As it happened, Edward was destined never to rule.

The last two years of his reign serve in some ways, however, to illustrate his ideas. A "Second Prayer Book", issued in 1552, went much further towards Protestantism than the first; more of the ceremonies of the Church were abolished; Articles of Religion—forty-two in number—were published, and other changes made, all following the ideas of the more extreme Reformers.

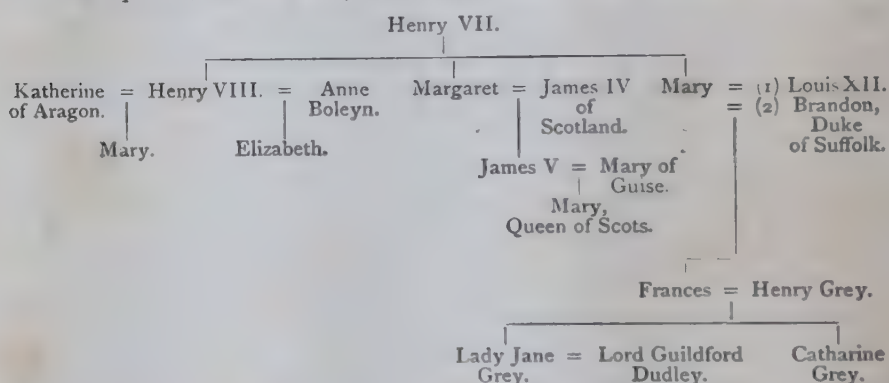
At the same time some useful steps were taken. To relieve the distress from which the labourers were suffering efforts were made to check the enclosures and to revive agriculture; the first Poor Law enacted that collections were to be made in each parish for the poor; and the expenses of the royal household were lessened. Unluckily time, the one great healing element in all political troubles, was lacking; what England needed was stable government, and it became increasingly clear that another change was at hand. Edward's health failed, and the next heir was the Catholic Mary. Where the future was so uncertain, the present was bound to be dark, unsettled, troublous.

To no one was the prospect more menacing than to the Earl of Warwick, who had contrived Somerset's fall, and now ruled in his place. The son of Henry VII's minister, that Dudley whom Henry VIII had put to death chiefly because his enterprise in collecting money for the Crown had made him bitterly hated, John Dudley—now created Duke of Northumberland—had proved himself a capable soldier and a successful, if unscrupulous, politician. He had at any rate the politician's instinct of being on the crest of the wave. Neither sincere nor trustworthy, he had taken the side of the extreme Reformers, partly because it agreed with the young king's ideas, partly because he knew that the old nobility who favoured the system of Henry VIII would, if they returned to power, at once overthrow him. But if the honest Somerset could not succeed in making the country accept a form of Protestantism for which it was not yet ready, the dishonest and selfish Northumberland was certain to fail. Balancing thus upon the favour of the young king and the unsteady support of the Council, Northumberland in 1552 found his position becoming more and more precarious as Edward VI's health failed. Accordingly he set to work to secure himself. It was not difficult to convince Edward that, if Mary came to the throne, the Reformation would be undone, and Edward was sincere in his support of the Reformation, even if Northumberland was not. Accordingly, by Northumberland's advice, he made a will setting aside both Mary and Elizabeth as illegitimate, and leaving the crown to Lady Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's

Northumberland.  
The Protestant  
succession.

youngest sister. As Northumberland had shortly before married his second son, Lord Guildford Dudley, to Lady Jane, this stroke would not only have secured the Protestant succession, but also the family influence of the Duke himself. He would at any rate be safe, and as father-in-law of the new queen he might hope to be ruler of the kingdom.

If the nation had been set on having a Protestant sovereign, Northumberland's scheme was sound enough. Lady Jane certainly had all the good qualities of a queen. It soon became clear, however, that the nation was not so set. When Edward died, in 1553, Northumberland tried to lay hands on Mary ere she learnt the news. But a friend brought her immediate warning, and she slipped away to her Catholic friends, the Howards, in Norfolk. She at once declared herself queen, and everyone supported her claim. Even in



London Northumberland's plans failed hopelessly. His proclamation of Lady Jane as queen was received in silence or with protest. His son, Lord Robert Dudley, sent to arrest Mary, reached her in Norfolk, but his men would not fight. The fleet declared for Queen Mary. Thousands of men were rallying to her cause. Even Northumberland's own force, which he led into the Eastern Counties, mutinied and deserted him, and on July 20, less than a fortnight from Edward's death, he was forced to give up hope, and himself proclaimed Mary queen at Cambridge. If he thought to disarm the anger of a Tudor in this way he was soon undeceived. He was arrested the next day, and sent to the Tower. There he grovelled further, and



announced that he had been always at heart a Catholic, and only a forced supporter of the Reformation. Having thus made him do the cause of the Reformation, all the harm he could, Mary had him beheaded.

#### 4. Mary: the Catholic Reaction

At her accession Mary was thirty-six; half a Spaniard and half a Tudor; neither, then, by age or blood, easy to be turned from what she had set her mind on. Moreover, all her life she had been soured. Her mother divorced and scandalously treated, herself declared illegitimate, her claim to the throne doubted, surrounded by enemies, often held as a sort of prisoner, half a foreigner holding ardently to Rome and the Catholicism which the nation had thrown off, she was, by training and faith, quite out of sympathy with England. Northumberland was not a wise politician, but he did know what Mary was likely to be as a queen.

England had no such terrors. A Catholic sovereign was not to be feared in the same way as a Catholic sovereign was feared in James II's day, because England had so far never known any other sovereign than a Catholic. Henry VIII, even in his most anti-Roman moments, had never doubted that he was a most sincere Catholic. Edward VI had never ruled; all his reign was filled by Somerset and Northumberland, and if such were examples of Protestant rulers, they were not encouraging. The mass of Englishmen looked on their new queen as a daughter of Harry Tudor, and welcomed her with the loyalty they always gave to all Tudors. The attempts at reform in doctrine under Edward VI had been profoundly unpopular. They wished for a return to the days of "good King Harry". That Mary would break with the policy of her father, and try to bring England again under the power of Rome, did not appear to occur to them.

Hence Mary's brief reign is divided into two parts. First came a short period of securing her position on the throne, and of reversing the premature reform in doctrine made by Edward VI and his ministers. In the second, a longer period, the queen disclosed her real plans, married a

Mary's reign  
divisions.

Spaniard, and tried to restore the Papal power. The first period of "Restoration" is the reign of "Mary Tudor"; the second period of "Reaction" is the reign of "Bloody Mary".

At first, then, Mary and her subjects were at one. By common consent the mass came in again. Parliament, meeting within two months of the queen's accession, repealed

Restoration.

the religious acts of Edward VI, and went back to the "divine service used in England in the last year of Henry VIII's day". Some of the more prominent Reformers left the kingdom—John Knox, who had been Edward VI's chaplain, among them. Archbishop Cranmer, and the bishops of the same party, Latimer and Ridley, were deprived of their sees, and the old occupants of the sees of Winchester and London, Bishop Gardiner and Bishop Bonner, restored. Even the queen's ideas for her marriage did not offend England. The nation, indeed, wished her to marry Courtenay, Earl of Devon—the last representative of the Yorkists; and when, urged by her cousin, the Papal Legate, Reginald Pole, and the Spanish Ambassador Renard, she refused this, and insisted on marrying

The Spanish match.

Philip II of Spain, the idea of a Spanish match was unpopular, but no real resistance was made. There was certainly an insurrection, favoured by Courtenay, the Duke of Suffolk and Northumberland's friends, and led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, but it failed to find much support. Even in London, where the cause of the Reformation was strong, the citizens held London Bridge against Wyatt. Most of the leaders were captured. Wyatt and Suffolk were beheaded; so, too, were the luckless Lady Jane and her husband; Courtenay was imprisoned, and even the Princess Elizabeth was sent for the time to the Tower. The treaty of marriage was confirmed by Parliament, and in July, 1554, Philip came to England and married Mary.

This was the most threatening of all the dynastic marriages of the time. True, it nominally secured for England the alliance of the most powerful state in Europe. It might be regarded as a counterblow to the marriage between Mary Queen of Scots and the Dauphin. France and Spain are at the time the two great lords of Europe. Mary of Scotland marries France: so be it: then Mary of England will do better, and marries Spain—and

Spain was a greater country than France. National vanity so far might be soothed in the glories of the Spanish match, but in truth there were innumerable dangers. Not only were both kingdoms in danger of being swamped in the stormy sea of the struggle between France and Spain; not only might an actual union of the French and Scottish thrones be menacing for England if Spanish troops were to be landed to protect us; far worse than either was the peril that England might be absorbed into the Spanish monarchy. The "Hapsburg net" was round her; the octopus that had stretched its tentacles so wide in Europe had her in its grip. She might lose independence, as the Netherlands were losing it, and become, as the Netherlands became, but a Spanish province—and with disastrous results. True, that in the marriage-treaty precautions had been taken: Mary alone was to manage English affairs and revenues; no foreigner was to hold command in army or fleet; England was not to be drawn into war with France through the match; if there was a son, he was to rule in England, Burgundy, and the Netherlands, but not in Spain. These were sane precautions; but men take precautions against what they fear to be likely to happen; and treaties are not always kept. The son of such a match—of a half-Spanish mother and a Spanish father—would have every element of danger about him. As it happened, England was spared that son. Wyatt's battle-cry, "No Spanish match! No Inquisition!" voices the popular dread; and he and his supporters were right. For more than thirty years the results of this marriage hung like an ever-deepening stormcloud over English politics; and then in the thunder of the Armada it burst and passed away. But a whole generation of Englishmen had walked in the fear of it.

This "Spanish match" is the turning-point in Mary's reign. With Spain at her back she set out on her scheme of restoring England to the Roman allegiance. The Papal Legate, The Catholic Reaction. Cardinal Pole, was permitted to land. Careful management of the elections produced a compliant Parliament, which repealed Henry VIII's ecclesiastical laws and begged that their sin of separating from Rome might be pardoned. Pole accepted the submission, withdrew the interdict, and England was again included in the Roman obedience. He yielded, indeed, something more: the



old monastery lands were to be left to their present possessors. Everything could not be rubbed off the slate all at once.

England once more in the Roman fold, Mary and Pole set to work to secure obedience by persecution. Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, Rogers, a canon of St. Paul's, Ferrar, <sup>The</sup> burnings. Bishop of St. David's, and fourteen others were tried for heresy. Doubtless Mary and her advisers expected them—or most of them—to recant. Only *one* did so; the rest all went to the stake. This was the prelude. In May, 1555, it became clear that the queen was not going to have the child she expected, and her disappointment quickened her zeal for Holy Church. Through the summer the persecution sharpened. In September, Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley were tried together. Latimer and Ridley were burnt at Oxford. A delay was given to Cranmer; burning an archbishop required special authority from Rome, besides there were hopes that he might recant; but after making a submission he manfully withdrew it, and declared that he would die a Protestant, thrusting "that unworthy hand" that had signed his submission first into the flames.

Cranmer was the last notable victim of the persecution; indeed, with the exception of about half a dozen church dignitaries, there were no notable victims. No distinguished layman suffered for his faith—either the distinguished laymen, or the government, were too cautious. But there were some two hundred and seventy martyrs—little-known men—"some there be that have no memorial". Everyone knows Latimer's bold words to his brother bishop Ridley: "Play the man, Master Ridley; and we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out". The candle was lighted, doubtless. But it may be questioned if it was Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, and the greater martyrs who did most to light it. It is not easier for a bishop to be a martyr than for an ordinary poor man, but if need be, it will be expected of him to die for his faith as a soldier will die for his country: martyrdom at times becomes an episcopal privilege. Ordinary men are more shocked by the sufferings of the great, but more convinced by the heroism of their fellows. It was possible to doubt the reforming zeal of Henry VIII's day which was rewarded with Church lands,

or the enthusiasm of Edward VI's reign, when the king and his ministers led the way, but there could be no doubt about Mary's Protestants, whose only guerdon was the martyr's death for conscience' sake. Hitherto Protestantism had been somewhat suspect, as savouring of worldly gain, dubious motive, and wavering faith. The determination which took simple folk to an agonizing death by fire, rather than give up their faith, made the Protestant cause.

Mary hoped by her persecution to convert England, and she did much to convert it—but it was to the other side. A sullen hatred rewarded her and Pole and Bonner and the Catholics, and above all Mary's Spanish husband Philip, who, it was assumed without much reason, had pushed Mary to persecute. Yet little could be done. A rebellion would fail without help from abroad. If French troops came, Spanish troops would certainly come also, and the realm become a battle-ground. Anything was better than that. Besides, it was known that Mary was stricken with a mortal disease. To wait was best.

Yet short as the time left to Mary was, it was enough to bring one more humiliation—another result, men said, of the Spanish match; for friendship with Spain had meant <sup>The loss</sup> war with France. England had nothing to gain from <sup>of Calais.</sup> war, but France had, for Calais was still in English hands. On Calais, then, the French attack was directed, with every hope of success, for the garrison was small and the fortifications ruinous. Lord Wentworth, in command at Calais, knew what was preparing. He wrote urgently for men and money, but Mary would send neither. Every penny she could spare was spent on the pious task of restoring churches and refounding abbeys. In answer to Wentworth's letter of 29 December, that the French army was at hand, Mary replied that she had certain information that "no attack on Calais was intended". Before the letter reached him Wentworth had information even more certain, for 25,000 French were at the gates: with a garrison just able to oppose one man to every fifty of his assailants Wentworth held on for five days, but never a man nor a ship was sent from England. On January 6 he surrendered. Lord Grey in the neighbouring fortress of Guisnes still hung on, but on January 20 he too had to yield.

So vanished the last English possession in France. At first valuable as giving a gate for English trade to the Continent, or as a point of attack on France, the use of Calais had long passed away. England's policy was changing to a new phase. She no longer sought a conquest of France; her eyes were beginning to turn over sea; and Spain was to be henceforth her national foe. But that was not seen at the time; Calais had been in English hands since 1347. It was the one fruit left of the harvest of Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, the memorial of the Black Prince and Henry V; the nation's credit seemed to rest on its safe-keeping, and deep was the humiliation at its loss. Even Mary, un-English as she was, declared that when she died the word "Calais" would be found written on her heart.

## 5. The Religious Settlement

When Mary died on November 17, 1558, the solution of the long-drawn-out problem of the Reformation was left to Elizabeth. Thirty years had seen many changes. First Henry VIII's *Political* Reformation, the overthrow of the Papal power in England but the leaving of doctrine practically unchanged; then under Edward VI an attempt at establishing a *reform in doctrine*. This had proved premature and unpopular. Then under Mary *Reaction*, first to Henry VIII's system, and then back to Roman Catholicism pure and simple. This last had also been exceedingly unpopular. Now the cautious wisdom of Elizabeth and her great minister Cecil devised a fresh system which proved enduring.

Certain conditions of the problem, however, had altered and so made Elizabeth's task easier. The Protestant party had grown stronger, and the Catholic weaker. The trans-  
Elizabeth's advantages. lation of the Bible, for one thing, had worked on the side of the Protestants, for though the Bible itself is on no side, yet the more the Bible was in men's hands, the more they inclined to judge in religious matters for themselves; and this habit of "private judgment", in place of accepting what is laid down by "authority", is the basis of Protestantism. Secondly, as has been shown, Mary's persecution had worked for the



Protestant cause; it had made waverers see that the Protestants were really honest and in earnest. Thirdly, it was no longer possible to rest content with the system of Henry VIII: no country could continue to profess itself Catholic and yet be in flat defiance of the Pope. If Elizabeth's government was to endure it must have the support of either the Protestants or the Catholics; it could not halt between two opinions for ever. Finally, the Catholic cause had weakened, owing to the idea that it was a *foreign* cause. It was the cause of Philip of Spain; and Elizabeth's Catholic rival, Mary Queen of Scots, was the wife of a French prince. Hence the loyalty to Elizabeth grew more and more to be a Protestant loyalty; and as the Protestants were the loyal party, the Catholics tended to be thought the disloyal party—a charge which was sometimes quite unjustified, yet sometimes true, and always hard to rebut.

As the conclusion of the long drama of the Reformation one seems to expect some great political stroke, some wide-reaching act that will settle the vexed question. There is, of course, nothing of the kind. The details of "the Elizabethan Settlement" are not striking. Compared with the fierce changes of the last reigns they seem moderate. As Pole was dead the Archbishopric of Canterbury was vacant. It was given to Matthew Parker, a moderate Protestant. Elizabeth followed this by granting leave for the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Commandments to be said in English in the Church service, and for the gospel and epistle to be read from the English version. In 1559 Parliament met and drew up the Settlement. Briefly the details of it were:—

Elizabeth's  
religious  
settlement.

1. The Repeal of the Act of 1554. This again abolished the Papal power in England and brought into force Henry VIII's ecclesiastical legislation.

2. An Act of Supremacy, declaring the queen to be "supreme of all persons and causes ecclesiastical as well as civil".

3. An Act of Uniformity, accepting (in the main) Edward VI's Second Prayer Book; and laying down that vestments of the clergy and ornaments of the churches were to be as established by Parliament in the second year of Edward VI. The "Articles of Religion" of Edward VI, reduced from 42 to 39, were re-enacted.

It seems little on which to base a great Church settlement; not much that was remarkable, nothing that was exactly new. On the other hand it was conspicuously wise. The first act was inevitable: England would never accept the Papal power. But this blow once struck, everything was done to spare the wounded feelings of the Catholic party. The Act of Supremacy is far more cautious than Henry VIII's blunt declaration that he was "Head of the Church", and only office holders had to take the oath; the ordinary layman was left alone. The Prayer Book is the Prayer Book which we have to-day; and no word against Rome is in it. Even the Litany, which enumerates a very comprehensive catalogue of bodily and ghostly perils, has nothing about the Pope. There was such a clause in Edward's Prayer Book, but Elizabeth's advisers struck it out. Prayer is offered for the conversion of "Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics"—but not of Papists. The Communion service is so worded that those who believed in the Real Presence, and those who did not, could alike accept it. Alternative prayers for the sovereign, one more, the other less definitely Protestant, are provided. Men could do in many ways as seemed good to them and yet feel they were within the law. There was little severity threatened save to those who obstinately maintained the authority of the Pope; these were declared traitors. All save one of Mary's bishops and about two hundred churchmen refused to take the oath of Supremacy, as was to be expected, and resigned their posts. Elizabeth was able to fill them with men of her own choice, and so had the heads of the Church thoroughly in sympathy with her. Even where Catholics refused to come to church and had the mass celebrated at home, the Government made no attempt to interfere save by imposing a shilling fine for not going to church. A man was permitted to compound for himself and his household at a rate of 20s. a month. The payment is not so trivial as it seems; to get the value of the money it must be multiplied by ten or so; and as the "Recusants" had also to pay their own priests, the being a Catholic was expensive. One after another of the county gentry, desiring to economize, found attendance at his parish church an easy way of doing it. One came in after another, and *time*

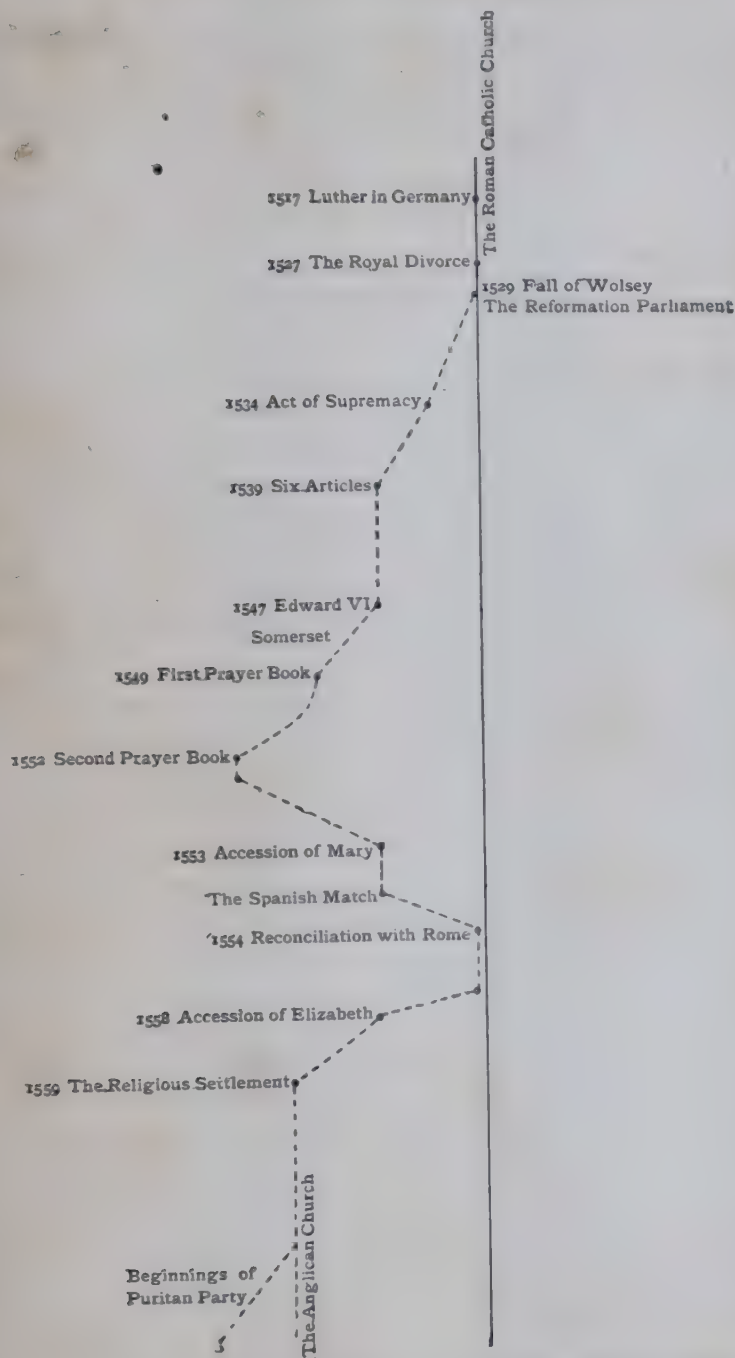


Diagram illustrating the Divergence of the Anglican Church from the Roman Catholic Church



above all things was on Elizabeth's side. She was able to give her system the chance to take root: under her a new generation grew up who had never seen England Roman Catholic and therefore accepted without question the Anglican Settlement.

## XXIV. Elizabeth

### 1. Outlines of Elizabeth's Policy

So far we have been concerned with one aspect only of Elizabeth's reign—her settlement of the Church, ending the

**Outlines.** English Reformation: unquestionably important, yet in no way striking, nor even appearing at the time to be definitely final. For twelve years there were hopes that the queen might be persuaded back to Rome, and England with her. Meantime her wise tolerance in religion, and the general good sense of her arrangements, gave them a firm hold. By 1570 Pius V, despairing of gentler measures, declared her excommunicate, and henceforth sterner means than persuasion were to be tried.

Yet long before 1570—indeed from the beginning of the reign—there was in sight another means than the conversion of Elizabeth whereby England might again become Catholic. In European politics at the time there was still a firm belief in the state maxim, *Cujus regio ejus religio*. Where the sovereign was Catholic it was assumed the land would be Catholic; and in the main the assumption was true. No definite example had yet been seen of a land breaking away successfully from its ruler's creed. All the changes of the Reformation in England seemed to confirm the belief. Henry VIII's, Edward VI's, Mary's, and now Elizabeth's religious opinions had veered from one extreme to another, and England had veered with each. Hence all that seemed to be needed to regain England from the Reformation was a Catholic sovereign on the throne.

Various roads would lead to this end.

1. The next heir, Mary Queen of Scots, was a Catholic. If she were to succeed, all would, in the opinion of the Catholic

leaders, be well again: more especially if after the death of her French husband she were to marry some English Catholic.

2. The throne might be won for Philip of Spain, the late queen of England's husband, either by force or by marriage with Elizabeth. Possibly Philip might himself marry her, if the Papal dispensation were granted; or she might marry someone of the Hapsburg house. In either case a Spanish Catholic ascendancy would be re-established in England.

Politically, Elizabeth's reign is the story of the struggle with the "Counter-Reformation"—the term is used to denote that compound of the great Catholic allies—Spain, the The Counter-Reformation. Empire, and the Papacy—which had done so much to check Protestantism in Europe. The forces were enormously strong. Spain and the Empire together then meant practically all Europe, except France and the Baltic states. Spain was enormously rich from her possessions in the New World, and her soldiers were at the time the best in Europe. Further, the abuses in the Papal court had been set right, the old grounds of complaint removed, and at the Council of Trent (1546-63) much had been done to win back the wavering allegiance of many who had leaned for the time to the Reformed doctrines. The Popes had once more become earnest and zealous, and the same spirit marked all the leaders of the Roman Church. The great Jesuit order had been formed to win back the heretics. Much had already been done by the powers of the Counter-Reformation in Germany, and their efforts were now concentrated on England.

Against this attack the key of England's entrenched position is the throne. So long as Elizabeth lives, all is safe for the time: if her heir is a Catholic, there is peril in the future; if she has a Protestant heir, all is secure. At first the danger menaces covertly from a Scottish queen supported by the forces of the Catholic allies. After that queen's death the danger takes a fresh shape; it is open war with the Counter-Reformation and its champion, Spain; and its forces seem greater than England is likely to be able to resist.

For the Catholic cause Elizabeth's timely death is, if not essential, at any rate much to be desired. To Protestant England her life is invaluable: her marriage to a Protestant most

necessary, so that there may be a Protestant heir. Yet here comes the bewildering feature of the reign. Elizabeth's marriage. Elizabeth will coquet, but she will not marry. And further, such proposals for marriage as seem even moderately attractive to her, are not at all pleasing to the nation, for she repeatedly seems to intend marriage with a French prince; and he would of course be a Catholic.

Here Elizabeth was wiser than the nation. She saw that the best ally against Spain was France. France, though Catholic, was not of the Catholic Counter-Reformation party. She hated and feared Spain too much to join in that. She was Spain's great rival. Hence for Elizabeth to fish with the bait of a possible marriage was the best way to secure France: so long as Spain feared that she might make a French alliance, Spain would do nothing violent against her that might drive her into it. Once married, her value as a prospective catch would be

The French  
alliance.

gone. Thus by her coquetting with French princes, Elizabeth kept Spain quiet and France on her side; this friendliness with France lasted all through her reign and proved her great support in acute difficulties; and in the end, of course, the needful Protestant heir came from Scotland.

Elizabeth's reign, then, is one long struggle against the Counter-Reformation. It is convenient to treat it in four phases.

1. The Scottish phase: this covers the first ten years of the reign, and ends with Mary Queen of Scots seeking shelter in England, thus putting herself in Elizabeth's power (1558-68).

2. The period of Plots: these all have the same object—to release Mary, to marry her to some Catholic, and to place her on the throne as Elizabeth's successor. As no successor would be required till Elizabeth was dead, most of the plots included Elizabeth's assassination. The plots end with the execution of Mary (1587). This left nothing to plot about (1568-87).

3. The Armada: the forces of the Counter-Reformation try at last open war, and fail (1588).

4. The last days of Elizabeth (1589-1603): this sees the war with Spain carried to a successful issue, especially at sea; and with it may be grouped an account of the new maritime spirit,



the exploits of the buccaneers, and the early attempts at colonization—though some of these belong in date to an earlier period.

The Scottish phase comes first. In order to appreciate it a review of Scottish history is needful. Scotland, like England, had a Reformation of a character peculiar to itself. As has been seen, England was the first *considerable* state whose king took up the anti-Roman ideas of the Reformers and made them his state policy. Scotland gave the first example of a country which declared for a Reformation, both in politics and in doctrine, *in defiance of its sovereign*. This unique aspect of the Scottish Reformation makes it particularly important.

## 2. Scotland: the Unlucky House of Stuart

Since the final defeat of Edward I's scheme of annexation England and Scotland had influenced each other but little. They had remained ill neighbours; fighting on the Borders had been almost continuous; Scotland had steadily adhered to its alliance with France; every now and again quarrelling had developed into open wars in which Scotland usually lost the battles. No real progress had been made towards union. Now the time is at hand when the two countries were at last to find a common aim and a common interest in their religion; and while sympathy thus drew them closer, fortune—and Elizabeth's sagacity—gave the chance of the two crowns to join in the person of James I. It is therefore desirable to cast a glance over the policy and social condition of Scotland during these two hundred years of hostility, in order to see how in the end the two nations came together.

Robert Bruce died in 1329, having survived but one year after the Treaty of Northampton. His heart, after its romantic adventure in the good Lord James's keeping, came back to his native land to be buried beneath the high altar at Melrose in that magnificent abbey which seems to embody all that was best of Scottish patriotism, and in its ruin to mourn the disasters which befell Scotland under his successors. And his son David, aged but four years, reigned in his stead.

The purpose of this chapter is not to attempt any continuous account of Scotland under David II and the Stuart kings who

followed him, but merely to remark what were the

**Outlines.** general characteristics of the time; to observe, therefore, (1) *the main relations with England*, who, as Scotland's domineering and contentious neighbour, was bound to influence her politics most deeply; (2) *the French alliance*, to which Scotland was permanently faithful, on the principle of a common enmity with England; (3) *the elements of disorder at home*, which, in the shape of powerful barons and fierce Highlanders, harassed king after king, and prevented any real union or progress in the country. For more than two hundred years invasion from without or rebellion at home paralysed Scotland.

David II's reign saw both invasion and rebellion at work. The victory of Bruce had meant the ruin of Balliol's cause. His followers, the "Disinherited", were tempted to try a stroke to regain their lands when King Robert was gone. A small party of them landed, won the striking victory of Dupplin,<sup>1</sup> and, Edward III joining in, routed the Scots at Halidon Hill. The English and their allies completely overran the country; Edward Balliol was placed on the throne, and the little King David sent for safety to France. Then, however, Edward became absorbed in French wars; by degrees Scotland regained her lost fortresses, and even tried a counterstroke, invading England in 1346, while Edward was besieging Calais. The affair failed dolorously. The Archbishop of York and the northern Lords Percy and Neville met the Scots at Neville's Cross; as usual, the English archers won the day. David himself was wounded, made prisoner, and kept in England for eleven years.

Here in David's reign are displayed the perennial curses of Scotland at the time. Disunion at home; the old feud of Bruce and Balliol opening the door to an English invasion; the complete triumph of the English archer in the field, and the equally complete failure to conquer Scotland. In the picturesque tales of the heroes who won back Scotland for the Bruces, we seem almost to be back in King Robert's days. Yet one of the most illustrious of these partisans, William

Troubles  
among the  
great houses.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 157.

Douglas, the Knight of Liddesdale, did not hesitate to murder his old companion-in-arms, Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie, and that from mere savage jealousy. Ramsay had recaptured Roxburgh Castle, and the king, newly returned from France, rewarded him by making him Sheriff of Teviotdale, superseding the Knight of Liddesdale, who had held the office. Liddesdale bided his time, pounced on Ramsay—who, unarmed and unprepared, was sitting in court at Hawick, suspecting no treachery from an old comrade—hurried him to his castle of Hermitage, and there left him to starve to death in a dungeon. Though of no historical importance, the story illustrates what happened over and over again, even among the most valiant of the Scottish patriots; private grudges outweighed the nation's need; treacherous vengeance led to blood feuds which threw one side or the other into treasonable plots with England. Even Liddesdale bound himself to serve Edward in all his wars, "except against the Scots, *unless at his own pleasure*"—nor was he the only Douglas to turn traitor.

Fighting on the Borders went on pretty constantly during the latter half of the fourteenth century, the most picturesque event being the great moonlight affray of Otterburn, in which James, Earl of Douglas, was killed, and the two Percies, Ralph and Henry (Hotspur), made prisoners (1388). But during this time, and under the Lancastrian kings, no serious attempt was made by England to press the conquest of Scotland. The only considerable battle of the time is Homildon (1402), where another Douglas (Archibald, fourth earl), raiding the north, was waylaid by the Percies, who had this time their revenge for Otterburn. The battle had important results in the history of England, for it led up to that great league of Percy, Glendower, Douglas, and Mortimers, which harassed Henry IV; but, save that it once more showed the helplessness of the Scots against English archery, it had no result on Scotland. The Scots clung to their French alliance, and sent men to fight in France against Henry V and Bedford; they helped to win Beaugé (the first turn of the tide, 1422); and Douglas, keeping up his reputation,<sup>1</sup> lost

War:  
Otterburn,  
Homildon.

<sup>1</sup> He was nicknamed the "Tineman" (the *Lose-man*), and justified it by losing the battles of Homildon, Shrewsbury, and Verneuil. The nickname was, however, an inheritance; an ancestor (also an Archibald), brother of the Good Lord James, bore it also, and was killed at Halidon.



another battle at Verneuil—and his life this time. Stewart of Darnley was killed at the “Battle of the Herrings”, and other Scots fought in the Maid of Orleans’ company. But in Henry VI’s reign England’s hands were too full with French troubles for her to be able to resent these Scottish unfriendlinesses effectively; and then came on the Wars of the Roses, so that till Tudor times Scotland was left mainly to herself. Her internal calamities now call for mention.

David II had died in 1370, leaving no heir, and the crown passed to a grandson of Bruce through his daughter Marjory and her husband, Walter the Steward. This grandson came to the throne as Robert II, and began the line of the unlucky house of Stuart. Six kings descended from him sat on the throne of Scotland. Of these only one (Robert III) had a peaceful end, and he, before his death, saw one of his sons cruelly murdered and the other a prisoner in England. Robert III, too, was the only one to attain old age; none of the others lived to be forty-five; three of them were cut off ere they had entered on the second half of life’s natural span; James I was murdered; James II killed by the bursting of a cannon at the siege of Roxburgh; James III assassinated; James IV killed at Flodden; James V died of a broken heart; his daughter had the worst fate of all, for she perished on the scaffold after nineteen years of captivity. It is a series of disasters unparalleled in history—even in Scotland at a time when “life was short and death was violent”.<sup>1</sup> Yet, unlucky as the kings were, their country was even more so. Not the least misfortune, inevitably following on the premature deaths of the kings, was the constant succession of minorities. James I succeeded at the age of eleven; James II, at six; James III, at eight; James IV had reached eighteen—a ripe and statesmanlike age compared with that of his ancestors. But James V was not quite two years old when he came to the throne, and his daughter Mary at her accession was aged but one week. So minority followed minority, and regency regency, with every opening for ambition and violence; year after year, and reign after reign, war followed rebellion and rebellion followed war in dreary succes-

The House  
of Stuart.

Misfortunes  
of the house.

<sup>1</sup> Maitland.

sion. Homes burnt, fields ravaged, invasions, defeats, raids from the Highlands, hangings, murders, come one after the other. National independence was a good thing, but no use could be made of it while there was neither order nor firm government. A king could do little for his people so long as his whole resources were being strained to crush the great families into obedience.

Robert III was more or less a cripple, unable to ride about the country, or fight at the head of an army; therefore, for those days, an inefficient king. That he was by nature a kindly and charitable man only made the matter worse. The government fell into the hands of his brother, the Duke of Albany, and he, with Douglas (the Tineman), was concerned with the arrest of Robert's elder son, Rothesay, and probably with his death, which occurred (conveniently) while he was in prison. As the younger son, James, was captured by English vessels while voyaging to France in time of truce in 1406, and Robert III died soon after, Albany had the regency till his death, in 1420. James, however, on his return in 1424, at once struck at the new duke, Murdoch of Albany, and his two sons. They were executed, and James seized their estates. This vigorous stroke was followed up with laws against "bands" (covenants of alliance between nobles), a hanging of disorderly Highland chiefs, the imprisonment of Douglas, and the forfeiture of the earldom of Strathearn. This last proved his undoing, for Sir Robert Graham, heir to Strathearn, hatched a plot in the Highlands to murder the king. The chance soon came. James went to Perth to keep Christmas, and was lodged in the Abbey of Black Friars. On the way north he was warned that he would never return alive, but paid no heed to the warning. Late at night the conspirators "spoiled the locks" and burst noisily in; the king, who was sitting with the queen and her ladies, tore up a plank from the floor and took refuge in a drain below; there had been an opening from it to the outer end, but the king had just caused it to be walled up to prevent his tennis balls being lost there. Meanwhile above the ladies had tried to keep the door, the story being that one of them, Catharine Douglas, thrust her arm

Robert III.

James I.

through the staples in place of the bolt. Graham and his followers easily broke in, but not finding the king, were on the point of withdrawing, when the king unluckily made a noise below. Graham leaped down and stabbed him to death.

The next reign, that of James II, saw the culmination and fall of the power of the "Black" Douglasses. As that house played in Scotland somewhat the same part as the James II.  
The Douglas  
family. family of Neville (the Kingmaker) played in England almost at the same time, it is worth following in a little detail. If the Douglasses were every whit as dangerous, and on occasion treacherous, as the Nevilles, the methods of the Scottish kings in dealing with them were far less scrupulous than those of even Queen Margaret and Edward IV.

James II was a boy of six, and Archibald (fifth earl) was his regent. This earl was unenterprising for a Douglas, and died in 1439 without having distinguished his regency by anything in particular. The Earldom of Douglas, but not the regency, passed to William (sixth earl). This William, a boy of seventeen, was in a position that reminds one of that of Richard Neville the younger. Duke of Touraine, Earl of Douglas, owning land in Scotland right across the Lowlands, able to bring 5000 men of the best fighting quality into the field, himself with a title to the Crown, for he was great-grandson on the female side of Robert III, he was by far the most powerful subject of the King of Scotland. The king's ministers—Crichton the Chancellor, who was Governor of Edinburgh Castle, and Livingstone, the King's Guardian, lately at feud with each other—united to set a trap for Douglas. He and his brother David were invited to Edinburgh Castle to meet the young king. At dinner the Douglas brothers were seized, hurried into the castle-yard, and beheaded (1440).<sup>1</sup>

The leadership of the house of Douglas passed, after a few troubled years, to another William (eighth earl). With this earl, James II, now a boy of thirteen, was at first friends, but quarrels between Douglas, Crichton, Livingstone, and the Earl of Crawford distracted the land. At last James, imitating

<sup>1</sup> This is the occasion on which the famous "black bull's head" (the sign of death) was said to have been placed on the table.



Crichton's violence, invited the Douglas to Stirling, where the two dined and supped together; then the king accused him of being in "a band" with the Earls of Ross and Crawford to rebel, and bade him break the band. Douglas refused, and thereon the king dirked him with his own hand. Patrick Gray, standing by, "made siccar" by dashing out the wounded man's brains with a pole-axe. The ninth earl—James, brother to the murdered man—of course fell into rebellion and treason <sup>1452.</sup> with Henry VI. He was forgiven for a time, again intrigued with the English and the Highlanders, gathered an army and was overthrown at Arkinholm in Eskdale, and fled to England. So fell the family of the Black Douglas; but the king was not quit of them, for he had won the day only with the help of the younger branch, the Red Douglasses, Earls of Angus. These were to prove as intolerable as the elder branch had been.

In 1460 James II was killed at Roxburgh by the bursting of a bombard. James III being but eight, there followed the usual regency. Kennedy, Bishop of St. Andrews, the one honest and patriotic statesman of the time, who <sup>James III.</sup> is credited with having given James II the sage illustration of how to deal with his enemies,<sup>1</sup> favoured the Lancastrian cause. Edward IV won over the queen-mother, and made alliance with the exiled Douglas and the Highlanders. So the rebound of the Wars of the Roses led to more fighting in Scotland and on the Borders. When James grew up he quarrelled violently with his two brothers. The elder played the usual traitor's part, made alliance with England, claimed the crown as Edward IV's liegeman, and marched with an English army, led by Richard of Gloucester, into Scotland. James summoned his nobles to his assistance, and they gathered under Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus. But before fighting the enemy they had a grudge of their own to settle. James, who was a peaceful man, with refined tastes that found no pleasure in the wild barons of his country, had made friends with men who had some skill in music and architecture—chief of them Robert Cochrane, a mason—"a person of mean and sober estate", as a chronicler

<sup>1</sup> He gave the king a number of sticks tied in a bundle and told the king to break them. When James failed, Kennedy drew them from the bundle and snapped them *one by one*.

calls him. The nobles hated this favourite, and wished to overthrow him, yet did not see the means to do it. "I will bell the cat," cried Angus to them—hence his nickname, "Archibald Bell-the-cat"—and he kept his word by marching to the king's aid, arresting Cochrane in his tent, and hanging him from Lauder Bridge (1482). From murdering the king's favourites to attacking the king himself was but a short step, and five years later saw it taken. Angus was the chief traitor, with the southern Lowlanders at his back; with him was the king's eldest son (afterwards James IV), a boy of fifteen; the king had the support of the northern Lowlanders. Once he had the rebels at his mercy, but he granted them terms. They broke them, and

the forces, mustering again, fought at Sauchie Burn,

close by Stirling (1487). The Border spearmen of Angus and Hume won the day. James, galloping from the field, was thrown from his horse, and carried stunned and bleeding into Beaton's Mill. He asked for a priest, and a man calling himself such was brought in, who, bending over the king to hear his confession, stabbed him to the heart. So the story goes; the exact manner of the king's death is perhaps doubtful; anyway "he happinit to be slain" was what his enemies said—no doubt they knew best.

Ominously as James IV's reign had been preluded with the son in arms against the father, it showed for a time promise of better things. The king himself grew strong, and enforced the law; one curse of Scotland, disorder at home, died down. An alliance made with England by the marriage of James with Margaret Tudor (Henry VII's elder daughter), checked the fighting on the Border; while the Highlanders were kept in control by the raising to power of the half-Lowland houses of Campbell (Argyll) and Huntly (Gordon) in the west and east, to act as policemen against "the wild Macraus" of the north. So, till the death of Henry VII, all went well. When Henry VIII succeeded, the royal brothers-in-law began to bicker. The old fascinations of the French alliance attracted James. Henry, with a Spanish wife, favoured the cause of Spain against France. So James, like a knight-errant, adventured and lost all at Flodden (1513). He had a great force; Highlanders

under Lennox, Argyll, and Huntly; Borderers under Home and Hepburn; Perthshire men with Crawford and Errol—all the chivalry of Scotland was with him. He crossed the Tweed, took some castles near by, and pitched on the last southern ridge of the Cheviots, at Flodden Edge, a morass in front, his left flank guarded by the deep sluggish Till,<sup>1</sup> and with the Tweed at his rear. Surrey with a strong force, yet less in number than the Scots, kept the Till at first on his left, crossed it at Twizel Bridge, and got in James's rear. James seems to have lost touch with his enemy, and to have thought they were moving on Berwick. Even so the Scots were the better found, the English almost starving, and discouraged by having been for three days without beer; and James had the upper ground. The Scottish king was no tactician, however, and finding the enemy in his rear, moved down to meet him, the two armies impinging somewhat at an angle, so that the English right and the Scottish left came first into contact. Here the Scots had the advantage. Home and Huntly broke Edmund Howard and Tunstal, while Dacre, called up from the supports, had much work to stand his ground. Then the centres met in fierce and uncertain combat, James leading a charge against the Percies, who had broken the Perthshire men; the English artillery made great holes in his ranks, while the Scottish guns, either ill-worked or left behind in the hasty move down from Flodden Edge, were useless. On the Scottish right, which came last into action, the English were completely successful. Stanley, with a few archers, harassed Lennox and Argyll's Highlanders into a charge, and shattered them. The leaders fell; their men fled headlong. Thus each army had a wing broken, and the fight in the centre was dubious. But while on the Scottish left Home's Borderers had scattered to plunder and, as Fluellen says, "kill the luggage", Stanley kept his men in hand, and pressed in on James's flank. So hemmed in, James and his nobles fought their last fight—the king him-

Flodden.

<sup>1</sup> Says the Tweed to the Till  
 "What gars ye rin so still?"  
 Says the Till to the Tweed  
 "Tho' ye rin wi' speed,  
 And I rin slaw,  
 Yet for ae man ye droon,  
 I droon twa".



self pierced with arrows and hewn down within a lance's length of Surrey, his nobles pressing forward to cover him, and falling one by one under the sweep of the English bills. '

"'The Flowers o' the Forest are a' wede awa'." Flodden was a shattering defeat. High and low alike, from palace, castle, town, and cottage, were stricken there. Surrey's work was done; there was no need to go further; more than a century was to pass ere a Scottish army was again to venture far into England. And this time Scotland had been beaten in what would be reckoned a fair field. At Halidon and Homildon, the archers, and later, at Pinkie, the musketeers were the deciders of the day. The Scots had been beaten without the chance of striking a blow. Not so at Flodden; archery played a small part in the final struggle. It was hand to hand, English bill against Scottish spear; and the billmen had it.

James V's reign was in the main a repetition of the reigns of James II and James III, that is to say, the internal feuds revived; the country was distracted between warring  
**James V.** houses struggling for the possession of the king. This disorder was increased by the part played by Henry VIII and his ministers, who fostered an "English" party (of traitors) in Scotland, and, further, by the beginnings of the Reformation; obviously, when the Tudor king became the enemy of Rome, the Stuart king clung more closely to the old faith. For the present, merely noting that at first the beginnings of the Reformation tended to widen the gulf between the nations instead of closing it, we may leave the story of the Reformation in Scotland till Mary's reign.

After Flodden the chief persons left to rule Scotland were the queen, Margaret Tudor, Angus (head of the Red Douglas), and Arran (head of the Hamiltons). Within a year the queen married Angus, and henceforth the Douglasses were the English party in Scotland, in constant traitorous correspondence with Henry VIII. How lawless Scotland still remained was shown in the affray called "Cleanse the Causeway" in 1520. Angus and Arran were both in Edinburgh, to be present at a meeting of Parliament and to discuss a healing of their quarrel. Each, of course, brought his faction with him; Angus had 400 spearmen

at his back. Archbishop Beaton, taking the side of his Hamilton kin, urged the blessings of peace, and in the fervour of his speech smote on the bosom of his vestments; a hollow ring of metal answered the stroke; the archbishop wore a steel corslet beneath. "My lord, your conscience clatters," answered Gawain Douglas. Sir Patrick Hamilton also spoke for peace, but another of his name taunted him with cowardice. "I shall fight," answered Sir Patrick, "where thou darest not be seen," and, rushing out, he made an onslaught on Angus's spearmen. Straightway both sides fell to it, and up and down the High Street raged a fierce faction fight, which ended in the complete rout of the Hamiltons.<sup>1</sup>

For the next eight years Angus and the Douglas faction remained masters of Scotland and the king, in spite of the fact that Margaret Tudor had grown tired of her second husband, and obtained a divorce from him. Walter Scott of Branksome, and some allies in secret treaty with the king, endeavoured to waylay him at Melrose and rescue him from the Douglas claws, but Angus, helped by Kers and Homes, won the day,<sup>2</sup> and the boy king had to sham gratitude for his preservation. At last, however, he escaped to his mother at Stirling, and rallying to him those who hated the Douglas rule and their treason with England, was able to make himself king in reality. Angus was driven into exile in England, where he became a pensioner of King Henry, with Henry's instructions "to do all the mischief he could", still plotting to kidnap Archbishop Beaton—an old scheme of Wolsey's—or, better still, King James himself, and hand him over to his English royal uncle, who professed benevolence all the time.

The last fifteen years of the reign were fairly prosperous. On the whole peace was kept with England, and this kept treason at home within bounds. James did something to pacify the Borders by clapping the great Border lords in hold, and going round hanging notorious rascals, the chief of them Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie. He made a similar tour round the

<sup>1</sup> The affair is an interesting example of how barbarous Scotland was compared with England: seventy years had elapsed since Cade's riot; and even that was mainly political and social, not a purposeless feud between two noble houses.

<sup>2</sup> It was in the pursuit after this battle that Ker of Cessford was pierced by "dark Elliot's border-spear", as readers of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* will remember.

Highlands, established some garrisons, imprisoned some chiefs, and took the Lordship of the Isles for the Crown. There was talk of reform of the Church, and the College of Justice was set up in Edinburgh. But though outwardly there was peace with England, Henry and James were not at one; Henry, having severed himself from Rome, desired James to do the like, and break from the Auld Alliance with France. James had no mind to lose his old friend and the support of Rome. Further, his marriage policy vexed Henry. First, he married Madeleine, daughter of Francis I, when Henry had ideas for him to marry his own daughter, (Bloody) Mary. When his first queen died James went again to France and espoused Mary of Guise, whom Henry had his eye on for his own fourth bride. Henry had to content himself with Anne of Cleves—a further source of vexation. Then James refused an interview with his uncle, and gradually the two kings drifted into war. An English raid, with Angus traitorously leading it, was badly beaten in Teviotdale. In reply James mustered his nobles at Fala Muir, but they refused to follow him in an invasion. Borderers, however, were always ready to fight, and the King collected a mass of them in the West Marches and put them under a friend, Oliver Sinclair (whom the Scots distrusted as a commander), hoping to catch the English unprepared. Wharton, the English Warden, had early news of the raid, and advanced with some two thousand men to meet the raiders. The Scots were caught between the Esk and a morass; unable to deploy **Solway Moss.** and use their numbers, they made a disorderly retreat, which soon turned to a hopeless panic. All the guns were lost, 1200 men made prisoners, and many drowned; the English lost seven men. Such was the rout of Solway Moss (1542).

The disgrace of it crushed King James. A fortnight later a daughter was born to him. "It came with a lass, and it will go with a lass," was all he found to say. In a sort of stupor, murmuring at intervals, "Fie, fled Oliver!" the poor king lingered another week, and died at Falkland.

"In that mournful procession of the five Jameses there is no break. The last of them is engaged in the old task, and failing



as his forbears failed. It is picturesque; sometimes it is heroic; often it is pathetic; but it is never modern. Modern history sees it as a funeral procession burying a dead time, and we are silent while it passes.”<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Reformation in Scotland

The first fact to be borne in mind about the Reformation in Scotland is this: it stopped the weak spot in England's defences, and this at a time of England's greatest danger. Scotland had always been an ally of France, and a Catholic Scotland would have been, in Elizabeth's reign, a base from which the Counter-Reformation could strike. Imagine England's danger if Napoleon had been able to use a friendly Scotland as his base. Yet the danger would hardly have been greater in George III's reign than it was in Elizabeth's. A Reformed Scotland gave the enemy no opening for dealing a stab in the back.

Results of the  
Reformation  
in Scotland.

Secondly, it led to the union of two relatively small powers into one big one. To the European diplomatist of the early sixteenth century England was a second-rate power, mostly following the lead of Spain; Scotland a hanger-on of France. Thanks to the Reformation in Scotland and to the statesmanship of Elizabeth, the two were united in one Protestant power of first-rate importance—a fact of incalculable consequence in Europe; and for the first time England reaped the full value of being an island.

Union of  
the island.

Thirdly, Scotland gave the first example of a country making a Reformation in defiance of its rulers, and being successful in the effort. It was the first “popular” reformation, as opposed to royal or political reformations.

These are great happenings; yet one is tempted at first to say they are inevitable. Each of the two countries has a Reformation at the same time; it is only natural that the Reformers join in self-defence. So far from this being inevitable, it was at first exceedingly unlikely. Not only were the two nations bitter

<sup>1</sup> Maitland, *Cambridge Modern History*.

foes, but they had everything to keep them apart; and their Reformations were totally different in character. Henry VIII would have treated the Scottish Reformers as rebels. They, looking on themselves as the sons of the prophets, would have regarded him as Ahab and Nebuchadnezzar combined in one corpulent monster.

Between the affray at Solway Moss in 1542 and Queen Mary's crossing of the Solway to take refuge in England lie twenty-six years; another nineteen years take us to the end of the tragedy at Fotheringay Castle. So was spanned the life of Mary Stuart. It is in the first part, however, that the great events occur. In it the Scottish Reformation was secured, with the heir to the throne in the hands of the Reformers; in it England and Scotland learnt to face the common enemy, the Counter-Reformation, together; warfare between the two neighbours came to an end; Elizabeth's support saved the Scottish Reformation; the Scottish Reformers in return steadied Elizabeth's throne when it tottered.

In England the king had taken up the Reformation to suit himself, and shaped it to his own political purposes. The Scottish Reformation had in its beginning nothing to do with politics, nor could it be led by the king.

**Peculiarities  
of the Scottish  
Reformation.**

James V relied upon his clergy, upon France, upon the Pope. To side with the Reformers meant to break with all of these ancient allies, and the king could not face that. The Reformation in Scotland, then, was independent of the Crown; it was based upon criticism, upon the need of reform in the Church, upon the temper of the Scottish people. As there was in the Church much to criticize, and as the temper of the people took readily to theological and religious discussion, especially basing its judgments on its own interpretation of the Bible, there was fertile soil for the Reformers to work on.

The Church in Scotland was rich, but much of the wealth was not used for Church purposes. The bishops were far more nobles than ecclesiastics—warlike, greedy for wealth, and worldly-minded. They were often the younger sons of great families, who used their position to plunder the Church for their own house. They fought among

**The Church  
in Scotland,  
1500.**

themselves—James Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, having ordered the Prior of St. Andrews to mend his immoral life, the Prior—who belonged to the wildest of all Lowland families, the Hepburns—retaliated by arming his retainers and threatening war on the archbishop. Stewart, Archbishop of St. Andrews, who died fighting beside James IV at Flodden, only followed the habit of the day. Beaton, of the “clattering conscience”, was not the only one who wore a breastplate. The common clergy were poor, and ignorant, and ill-behaved; “dumb dogs” who did not preach—“drunken Sir John Latinless”, is Lyndsay’s name for them. The exactions found so burdensome in England were even more oppressive in Scotland. The “corse presents” (mortuary fees), the taking of the “best cloth” and a cow from the family of the dead, pressed hardly on the poor. Marriage, too, in a small country where relationship spread so widely, offered another point where the influence of the Church was oppressive. The prohibited degrees of cousinship came in so often that dispensations had perpetually to be obtained; and dispensations were not to be had without fees. Finally, the morals of the churchmen were openly and notoriously bad. In no country was the rule that the clergy must remain celibate more openly defied. Over and over again come the records of priests’ children being made legitimate, and no steps were taken to check the loose morality. Proposals for reform were made, orders issued, and so forth, but nothing was done.

Meanwhile the influence and writings of the German Reformers reached Scotland; translations of the Scriptures became common; Parliament and the Church tried to crush the new opinions, and in 1528 Patrick Hamilton, who had travelled in Germany and picked up the ideas of the time, was tried for heresy and burnt. “The reek of Mr. Patrick”, however, did not deter others, and George Wishart, another who had learnt the new doctrines abroad, returned to Scotland in 1543, and began preaching, at first in Dundee, and after in Ayrshire. His quarrels with the clergy grew, and Cardinal Beaton had him arrested, tried, and put to death at St. Andrews. Three months later Wishart was revenged; a gang of Beaton’s enemies—Leslie, Melville, and the Kirkaldys

Murder of  
Cardinal  
Beaton.



—slipped into the castle and stabbed him in his chair. His body was hung over the walls for the townsfolk to gaze at, just where, three months before, he had looked on at **May, 1546.** Wishart's execution. The murderers held out in the castle for more than a year. At length some French ships came to help the besiegers; then the "Castilians" surrendered, and were banished to the French galleys; with them went a man, after to be famous: a minister, "an earnest professor in Christ Jesus", a friend of Wishart, who had entered the castle during the Easter truce, and had been preacher to this band of godly murderers. This man was John Knox.

In 1547 Henry VIII died, and Somerset's policy was for a match between his young king and the child Mary Stuart; but, as has been seen, the battle of Pinkie shattered that hope. Mary was sent to France—England and Scotland being bitter enemies—and the Reform party in Scotland was checked. England was the only place whence the Reformers could get help, yet to ask for English help was to play the traitor; even to profess the Reformed doctrines smacked of treason, now that England, "the Auld Enemy", had turned Protestant.

Mary Tudor's accession, however, gave another shift to the wheel; with England once more Catholic, the Reformers of the two countries, each party downtrodden and persecuted, **Knox.** began to draw together. Knox came back to Scotland with some knowledge of Englishmen and their ways. After his release from the galleys in 1549 he had been Edward VI's chaplain, and had been offered a bishopric, prudently refusing it, as he foresaw "evil days to come". Had he been less farsighted he would have been burnt with Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer. Yet he found Scotland still too hot for him, and retired again; but the cause went on. Some powerful nobles—Glencairn, Argyll, Morton, and Erskine—united in a "band" to establish the "Word of God and his Congregation" against "wicked power that does intend tyranny". In 1557 the image of St. Giles, patron saint of the Mother Kirk of Edinburgh, was stolen and burnt; the next year the procession was rabbled in the street. Thus the people and a strong party of nobles had declared for the Reformers; the clergy had nothing to rely on

but the Crown and the French alliance. But that at any rate seemed firm, for in April, 1558, Mary Queen of Scots had married Francis, Dauphin of France, and (though it was not known in Scotland at the time) her husband was to be no mere king-consort; she had assigned to him, in the event of her death without issue, the throne of Scotland and her claims on England. Now at length it appeared certain that Scotland and France, so long allied, would be definitely united; and if so, the cause of the Reformers was lost.

#### 4. Scotland and Elizabeth

Such, then, was the situation when Elizabeth came to the throne. Mary had been six months married to the Dauphin, but was still in France; her mother, Mary of Guise, <sup>Elizabeth and Scotland.</sup> was regent in Scotland, keeping down, with some difficulty, the Reforming party headed by the "Lords of the Congregation", as Glencairn and the other Protestant nobles styled themselves. If Elizabeth was to secure Scotland she must support the Reformers; yet to do so was obnoxious, for two strong reasons. It would offend France, and she could not afford to quarrel with France as well as Spain; besides, she detested helping rebels, and it would be a dangerous precedent: it would be only too painfully easy for France to help rebels in England against her. And further, Knox, in the fullness of his zeal, had just issued his famous *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. It was directed against the three Maries,<sup>1</sup> all Catholics, and all, to Knox's mind, abominable. That the fate of England and Scotland should hang at this critical time upon a succession of queens, all marriageable, and all therefore potentially dangerous, in so much that their marriages might entangle their realms in all kinds of calamities, has always been a fact dwelt on by historians as most singular; and it moved Knox—an outspoken man—to more than his usual plainness of language. It was peculiarly unlucky that the *Blast*, intended to wither the

<sup>1</sup> Mary Tudor, Mary Stuart, and Mary of Guise. Knox uses the word *Regiment* to mean Rule or Government.

Catholic Mary Tudor, should deafen her Protestant sister on her accession. It gave Elizabeth great offence, however, and she refused to let Knox pass through England, and would have nothing to do with him.

No two years contain so many events as 1559-60. Knox came back to Scotland, and put heart into the Reformers. "The voice of that one man is able in an hour to put more life into us than six hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears," said one who knew him. His supreme quality was his fearlessness; some epitaphs flatter, but Knox's tells the naked truth: "Here lies one who never feared the face of man". Already the preachers and the Lords of the Congregation were at odds with the regent. A conference was invited at Perth, and both factions gathered; each suspected the other of treachery.

The sermon  
at Perth.

On May 11 Knox preached a sermon against idolatry, and the mob suited the action to the words by attacking and destroying the monasteries and religious houses in the city. The spirit spread to St. Andrews, Stirling, Dundee, Edinburgh, and over the country. "Burn the nests," cried Knox, "and the rooks will fly." Soon the Lords of the Congregation were in arms, and masters of Edinburgh. Most of the nobility had joined them; the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI was appointed for use in the churches, and the property of the plundered abbeys was to be "bestowed upon the faithful ministers". Needless to say, they did not get it; the great nobles intercepted most of it.

Faced with this rebellion, the regent looked for help to France. Here, too, momentous events had occurred; peace had been made between France and Spain at Cateau Cambrésis—an ill omen for Elizabeth, whose interest lay in their mutual enmity—and then, in the tournament held to celebrate the treaty, Henry II met with a fatal accident, so that Francis, Mary's husband, now became King of France. In July a French expedition to Scotland was preparing, and the Reformers appealed to Elizabeth. She refused to help, though she secretly sent some money.<sup>1</sup> For the time she waited to see how it would fare between the Lords of the Congregation and the regent,

<sup>1</sup> Bothwell robbed the messenger who carried it.



backed by the French. The French held Leith, and the Reformers could not dislodge them. An assault was beaten off, and the French occupied Stirling. The cause of Reform was almost lost when Elizabeth at last acted. She sent a squadron of ships under Winter to the Firth of Forth; so secretly had she acted that none knew at first in whose cause they came; but the action was decisive; to blockade Leith meant that the French would receive no more reinforcements (December, 1559).

Elizabeth  
helps the  
Reformers.

The credit of winning Elizabeth to this momentous step was due in the main to Maitland of Lethington. It was probably he who had persuaded the Reformers to drop the cry of "Religion" and unite on the more patriotic demand for the expulsion of the French and the regent. He went as envoy to confer with Elizabeth in November. Lethington was a statesman far in advance of his time. "The mark I always shoot at", he wrote, "is the union of England and Scotland in perpetual friendship." The first proof of his marksmanship was the sailing of Winter's fleet. It was followed by a treaty between Elizabeth and the Lords of the Congregation against Mary of Guise in February; an English army entered Scotland in April. Leith was besieged by English and Scots fighting side by side. In June the regent died. A month later the French surrendered, and were removed from Scotland; and the English departed too, leaving behind them, for the first time in the history of the two nations, gratitude instead of hatred. No advantage had been sought; not a word had been said of the old obnoxious claim of suzerainty. Elizabeth had played fair, when fairness was masterly, and had won. The Reformation in Scotland was safe (though this was not what she had played for), and she was safe too in having a Protestant Scotland over her borders. And here fortune came in to aid her. In December, 1560, Francis II died; and Mary Stuart was no longer wife of the King of France; she was but a childless widow, Queen of Scotland.

Treaty of  
Leith,  
July, 1560.

## 5. Mary Stuart

In August, 1561, Mary came home to her realm—and to her ruin. “Was never seen a more dolorous face of the heaven . . . that forewarning God gave unto us”, said Knox.

Mary Queen  
of Scots in  
Scotland.

It is hard to realize the pathetic tragedy of Mary's return. She was only nineteen; she had hitherto lived a happy life in a civilized country, first as a princess, then as Queen of France. Suddenly her husband had died, and she, childless, had to leave France and return to Scotland—a bewildering change. Scotland, in comfort, civilization, and manners, was about two centuries behind France. If one wants an example one has only to think of the Château of Amboise and the Towers of Holyrood, the one light, graceful, looking out over smiling river and countryside, perhaps the most charming “great house” in a land always supreme in great houses, the other low-lying and squat, dark and gloomy, with slits for windows carved in the great depth of walls which must always have suggested a dungeon rather than a palace. Palaces, true, are not everything; had Mary received that welcome and that sympathy from her people which, as a widow, as a beautiful woman, and as their queen, she deserved, the loss of all that France meant to her might have been forgotten. There is such a thing as rough loyalty; but Mary met all the roughness and very little of the loyalty. More than half her subjects were already rebels at heart because she was a Catholic. Her first mass at Holyrood was, though private, interrupted by brawlers clamouring at the door to put the priest to death. Knox, in his first interview with her, called her Church by a foul name. On her entering Edinburgh she was presented with a huge Bible—a fairly plain hint—and a number of children were set up to make a speech to her “concerning the putting away of the mass”. In fact, every preacher of the Reformed doctrines in Scotland thought it his privilege to check and insult his queen. The nobles were hardly better. Bothwell (probably) was plotting to murder her in her first year. Even Huntly, the chief of the Catholics, intrigued with the Hamiltons, and compelled the queen

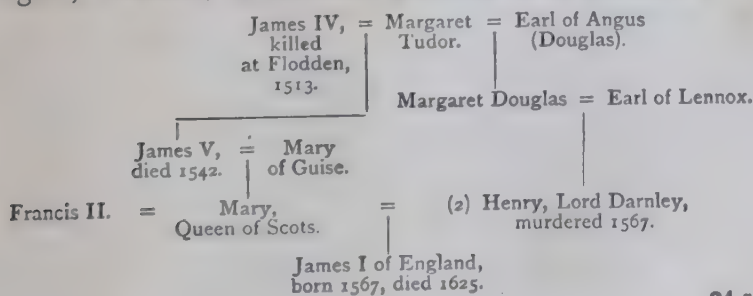
to fight against him till his death after a skirmish with the royal troops. Nowhere could Mary find faithful service.

Yet she was not powerless. She had her beauty and her astuteness. "If there be not in her a crafty wit," says Knox, "my judgment faileth me." Further, she was heir to the English throne, though Elizabeth would not recognize her title. Finally, she had another weapon: she could marry again.

It was recognized that inevitably she would do so, and all the politicians in England, Scotland, and on the Continent occupied themselves with matchmaking. There were <sup>Mary's</sup> rumours of everything—she would marry the King of marriage. Denmark or of Sweden; a son of the Emperor; Don Carlos; a French prince; even Philip II himself. Elizabeth pressed the choice of her own favourite noble, the Earl of Leicester. Mary pretended to consider this, but secretly made her own choice; and her choice fell on her cousin, Henry Lord Darnley.

One thing was to be said for this match; it did not entangle Scotland with either France or Spain; perhaps it may have commended itself to Elizabeth in this way, for though she opposed it she did not prevent it, as she might have done. She let Darnley go from England to Scotland. Yet it had dangers too, for Darnley was of Tudor blood, and thus the marriage joined two Tudor lines of claim to the English throne. Both Mary and Darnley were grandchildren of Margaret Tudor (Henry VIII's sister), who had married James IV. Thus, "if anything should happen to Elizabeth"—which, being translated by plotters, signifies "were she assassinated"—Mary and Darnley's joint claim to the throne would be almost irresistible; and this would mean a Catholic on the throne of England.

Again, however, Elizabeth's troubles were smoothed out by





the misfortunes of her rivals. Mary soon quarrelled with Darnley. He was vain and empty-headed, and she got no help from him. She refused him the crown-matrimonial, **Plots.** and he was much affronted by her refusal. So he allied himself with the Protestant nobles, who, finding a cause of offence in everything Mary did, joined him in a plot. The murder of Mary's Italian secretary, Rizzio, was to be the first item; how much further the plotters were to go none knows; probably the seizing of Mary and the crown for Darnley lay at the back of it. Mary had only Bothwell and the new Earl of Huntly faithful to her; against her many; the Douglas brood, Ruthven and Morton; nobles full of hate for an Italian upstart; Lethington, now left in the cold and jealous; Lennox, angered that his son was slighted over the crown; and her despicable husband screwing his courage up with much liquor. The conspirators signed a band<sup>1</sup> to support Darnley; he was to hold them quit of consequences "for whatsoever crime", and they were to have their religion established "conform to Christ's Book". The compost of crime and conscience is edifying.

On the evening of March 9 Darnley came up the private stair from his own room at Holyrood to Mary's; behind, Ruthven, **Holyrood,** Morton, and other plotters; Rizzio clung pitifully to **1566.** Mary's skirt, was dragged out, and dispatched by many stabs in the doorway leading from the queen's room; there the body was left, Ruthven's dagger sticking in it.

No political murder is more stamped with horror; nothing is more amazing than the skill with which Mary got the better of the murderers. In two days she had won over Darnley, had spoken of amnesty, and had persuaded him to escape with her to Dunbar. Her friends joined her; Bothwell brought in men, and the murderers scattered to seek safety. Mary's son was born in June, and all the summer she was talking of reconciliation; but she had not forgiven. In October another band was signed by very much the same set of plotters, this time against Darnley, though nothing was specified. In January, 1567, he fell ill of smallpox at Glasgow. When he was recovering,

<sup>1</sup>The plot was very widely known. Randolph, the English envoy, reported it to Cecil three days before the murder.

Mary visited him and brought him back with her to the Kirk-o'-Field, an old monastic house just outside Edinburgh. Here she visited him, going there for the last time on February 9; while she was sitting with him upstairs, Bothwell and some helpers were carrying in gunpowder into the room beneath Darnley's. Bothwell then fetched the queen, rode back with her to a masque at Holyrood, and late at night rode down again to Kirk-o'-Field. About 2 a.m. on the morning of February 10 Kirk-o'-Field was blown into the air. The bodies of Darnley and his page were found in the garden with no marks of powder on them. Probably they were strangled.

Bothwell's guilt is certain. How much Mary knew of the plot has remained one of the puzzles of history. None at the time doubted that she knew, and the whole train of events makes it hard to doubt now. But too many were in the plot to have it dragged into day. An inquiry was made and abandoned; Bothwell was "cleansed". Then came another thunderstroke. Late in April Mary was seized by Bothwell, no doubt with her consent, and carried off to Dunbar; Bothwell secured a hasty divorce from his wife; in a fortnight Mary and Bothwell re-entered Edinburgh together; on May 15 they were married. Even on her wedding-day Mary's brief infatuation for the ruffian was waning. She was heard to say that she longed to die. She was, however, still a long way from the end of her misfortunes. The next event was the gathering of the Lords of the North against Bothwell. The forces met at Carberry Hill, close to Pinkie; Bothwell's men deserted, and he escaped; but Mary was captured, brought into Edinburgh in her short red skirt, jeered at by the mob, and at last sent off to her prison on the island in Lochleven. Immediately after the silver casket holding the famous "Casket Letters" was captured from a retainer of Bothwell's, who had been sent to remove some of Bothwell's property from Edinburgh Castle. These letters, if genuine, would prove that Mary was privy to Darnley's murder and had consented to Bothwell's abduction of her. They were, therefore, the very piece of evidence which her enemies lacked to justify her imprisonment *without involving their own guilt*. It is certainly suspicious that they secured

Marriage of  
Mary and  
Bothwell.

so very promptly; and there is much else to show that some parts of the letters were forged and tampered with. But Mary never had the chance to disprove them.

When Mary was in prison Elizabeth began to *destir* herself a little on her behalf. She wrote to forbid the Lords to do her any injury, and to suggest that the little Prince James, her son, should be sent to England. There was talk of putting Mary to trial for her life, but in the end it was arranged that she should abdicate in favour of her son, and that her half-brother, Murray, should be regent. She entrusted to him her jewels; he sold some to Elizabeth.

Robbed of her jewels, her son, her throne, her liberty, Mary still had her beauty; she won over her jailor, George Douglas; the keys of Lochleven Castle were stolen, and Mary rode off wildly to join her last friends, the Hamiltons. Murray gathered the Protestant Lords, and routed the Hamiltons at Langside. Her last hope in Scotland gone, Mary fled in haste southward to the Solway, and two days after the battle crossed, an uninvited guest, into England. She wrote to Elizabeth: "It is my earnest request that your Majesty will send for me as soon as possible, for my condition is pitiable, not to say for a queen, but even for a simple gentlewoman". Pity, however, was not the motive most likely to guide Elizabeth.

Mary expected that either Elizabeth would help her, or that she would let her pass from England to seek aid in France or elsewhere. Elizabeth talked of restoring her to Scotland, or at all events of making terms with her enemies—but first she must be convinced that Mary was not guilty. It was the hope that she would get Elizabeth's help that induced Mary to submit to an inquiry at all. But from the first Elizabeth's mind was made up not to let her escape. So Mary was brought from Carlisle to Bolton Castle in Yorkshire, where she was out of reach of a rescue. An inquiry was held. Norfolk, the chief English Catholic noble, Sussex, and Sadler were to meet Murray, Morton, and the Scots envoys. But Mary was never allowed to see the evidence against her, nor to have an interview with Elizabeth; she had no justice given her. Morton, the chief witness against her, had been leader in the plot to murder Rizzio, and privy to Darn-



ley's taking off.<sup>1</sup> He was far more guilty than the queen. But Elizabeth did not want a decision; if Mary was innocent, she must be released; if guilty, punished. Both courses were desperately inconvenient, so Elizabeth preferred to keep her a prisoner—neither guilty nor acquitted—with the shadow hanging over her.

## 6. The Period of Plots, 1568–87

So passed away the immediate peril of a hostile queen in Scotland who was a Catholic, marriageable, exceedingly attractive, and heir to Elizabeth's throne. Mary was a prisoner, and the Reformation was established in Scotland: that gateway of attack was blocked to France or Spain. This meant much in the way of security. But in the ten years from 1558 to 1568 other things had happened to help Elizabeth. Not only was she stronger, but her enemies had grown weaker. The wars of religion had burst out in France. At the head of the extreme Catholic party there was the house of Guise, and the Guises set up a claim to the throne. As a safeguard against the Guises the kings of France sought Elizabeth's friendship, and this friendship was maintained; it survived even the shock of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. One prop to the alliance Elizabeth furnished by her marriage policy; she "considered" a proposal to marry a French royal prince, Anjou. True, she was not in earnest; privately she alluded to her suggested bridegroom as her "Frog"; but an appearance of negotiation was kept up. So France, severed from Scotland, distracted by religious wars and by the ambitions of the Guises, who in their turn were backed by Spain, was perforce friendly to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's  
improved  
position.

Spain, too, was less strong, also on account of a religious war. The Low Countries, her richest province, were in rebellion; and the rebellion proved unexpectedly hard to crush. Through Elizabeth's reign the struggle went on, and it gradually sapped

<sup>1</sup> Bothwell had tried to enlist him in the plot, but he had refused to join without Mary's signed warrant, which Bothwell could not get. His first cousin, Archibald Douglas, was present at the explosion, and Morton knew he was going there.

the Spanish power. 'This gave Elizabeth another vantage-ground. She might aid the rebels; true, she was not likely to do it, for that would provoke a war with Spain. But she could hint at doing it; and Spain would be cautious not to act vigorously against her, for fear that she might retaliate by helping the Dutch rebels.

Thus these ten years had seen Elizabeth's place on the throne grow much firmer. Her people were loyal; her settlement of the Church was winning its way; her enemies were occupied at home. Still, she was not yet out of the wood. Mary was her captive, but there would be schemes to release her and marry her. This would have to be done secretly, hence the next phase—the "period of plots".

What was coming was foreshadowed at that inquiry held over Mary in 1569. Norfolk, Elizabeth's chief commissioner, was at first convinced of Mary's guilt. Then he changed his mind, and began to scheme to marry Mary. As he was the chief English Catholic, such a marriage would have pleased the Catholic party. It might even have produced a Catholic heir to the throne, for nothing was yet settled about the succession. But Elizabeth's ministers were vigilant, and well served by their spies. The plan was revealed; the inquiry was closed; and Mary was sent off, half-guest, half-prisoner, to Tutbury.

The next step was more formidable. Norfolk and his friends intrigued with the Duke of Alva, the Spanish commander in the Netherlands. They promised to head a rising and  
The Rising in  
the North. arrest Cecil, Elizabeth's chief minister; Alva was to furnish troops; Mary was to be released. Alva refused to send his men before the rebels showed themselves to be in earnest, and Elizabeth's ministers were again too quick and too well-informed. Orders were given to arrest the most dangerous plotters, the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland. How dangerous these two were their names bear witness. Percy and Neville were the two great fighting names in the north; and the north was still used to arms, and warlike. The earls called out their border forces, seized Durham, and had the mass sung in its cathedral; then hurried southward to capture Mary. But Mary was taken to Coventry, and the queen's forces barred the

earls' march in the West Riding. There was no fighting; the leaders escaped to Scotland; the rebels scattered; many were caught and hanged in the towns and villages of Durham and Yorkshire; there was need of a sharp lesson. So ended the Rising in the North. It is worth note that while the earls wished their cause to appear to be the Catholic cause, and made show that they were fighting for their faith, Elizabeth took pains to display them as merely rebels. As if expressly to destroy their claim to be the Catholic party in arms for the Catholic cause, she sent against them a Catholic as commander, the Earl of Sussex.

Up till now, indeed, it was not clear that in the end Elizabeth might not return to the Church of Rome. The "English heresy", as it was regarded by the Catholic party, had lasted long, but they trusted that it would be overcome in time; it was hardly conceivable that Elizabeth would persist in a cause that seemed to sever her from all other European monarchs. Consequently the Papacy had been long-suffering, affording her leisure for repentance. Now, however, it seemed time to remind her that her attitude could no longer be tolerated, and in 1570 Pius V declared her excommunicate, and her subjects released from the duty of obeying her. This, it is true, need not mean a final breach—excommunication could be revoked—but it made it clear that Rome regarded her for the time as an enemy, and expected Catholics who were true to their faith to take part against her.

Hence came a fresh outburst of plots, both from at home and abroad.

A few fervent Catholics in England, and enthusiasts in Spain, France, and Italy, all began to see that to dethrone Elizabeth was their duty. First came the Ridolfi plot (1571). This Ridolfi, a Florentine banker, was in the confidence of the Pope, and employed as an agent between Norfolk, Mary Queen of Scots, and Philip of Spain. Alva was asked to send help from the Netherlands; he, however, answered, with caution, that he was doubtful of success unless Elizabeth should first die a natural death, "or any other death". Eventually the plot leaked out through Burleigh's spies; Norfolk was arrested, and put to death.

The excommunication.

Ridolfi's plot.



A brief period of comparative calm followed. By the Treaty of Blois, France had agreed not to support Mary's cause in Scotland, and Elizabeth and the French Court managed to keep friends in spite of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (Aug., 1572). The rebels in the Netherlands proved stubborn and kept Spain occupied; and even when Don John had nearly subdued them, and was planning to invade England and marry Mary himself, Philip was so much alarmed at his half-brother's ambitious plans that he recalled him.

The next trouble came from the Jesuits. Since its foundation, in 1540, by Ignatius Loyola, this order had produced the leaders in the struggle to win back the peoples that had adopted the teaching of the Reformation. In 1568 a school for English Jesuits was set up at Douai—moved ten years later to Rheims—on purpose to train a set of missionaries to reconvert England. Such persons came to England at the risk of their lives: one Jesuit had been executed in 1571. A fresh campaign began in 1580, with the arrival of Campian and Parsons. Nominally they did not meddle in questions of state, but their teaching had a marvellous influence in reviving Catholic hopes throughout England, and the Government caused Campian and several of his companions to be arrested, tried for treasonable plotting, and executed. There was little proof against Campian, but his comrade, Parsons, who escaped, showed by his subsequent career that he certainly did meddle in questions of state. He sent two Jesuit companions into Scotland to stir up a rising in Mary's cause; he plotted with Mendoza, the Spanish envoy in London; he colloqued with Philip and the Pope, and planned Elizabeth's murder. But the English assassin, who was to kill the queen for a reward of 100,000 francs, was, as Parsons regretted, "a worthless fellow, who would do nothing". Parsons persevered, however, and was thick in the next murder plot, which was got up by Mendoza and a Cheshire gentleman named Francis Throckmorton. Again Burleigh and Walsingham were well-informed; Throckmorton was arrested (December, 1583) and executed, and Mendoza dismissed.

So far Elizabeth had seemed to bear a charmed life; the great

The Jesuits  
Campian  
and Parsons.

Throck-  
morton's  
plot.

bulk of her people were enthusiastically loyal; the plotters half-hearted and inefficient. But in 1584 came a thunderstroke of politics—so-called—to show that plots did not always miscarry. William the Silent, Prince of Orange, the heart and centre of the rebellion in the Netherlands, was shot by an assassin in Spanish pay<sup>1</sup>, Balthasar Gérard. Just at the same time Anjou's death made it clear that the crown of France would go, after Henry III's death, to Henry of Navarre, who was a Protestant. The prospect of being ruled by a heretic was, to many French Catholics, unbearable; and forthwith civil war broke out in France. This was disastrous for Elizabeth. Not only would she get no help from France, if she needed it, against a Spanish invasion—now far more probable since William of Orange was gone, and the Spanish troops under Parma were triumphant in the Netherlands—but, what was worse, the Catholic party in France, alarmed at the prospect of a Huguenot on the throne, were inviting help from Spain. If, as seemed likely, France and Spain were to unite in a Catholic league, Elizabeth and the cause of England would be lost. The dagger or a pistol-shot; a swarming over of Spanish troops; the Inquisition, the faggot, and the stake; and the downfall of all Englishmen held dear—such was the prospect of the black years following 1584.

England made what reply she could. Twelve years before, Parliament had petitioned for Mary's attainder, but Elizabeth would not permit it. In the peril of 1584 an Association was formed, the members of which undertook to prosecute to the death anyone plotting the queen's death, and also *any person in whose favour such an attempt was made*. Parliament followed this up with an act which provided that if such a plot were formed with the "privity" of any person pretending a title to the throne, that person could be tried for treason by royal commission. This might not secure Elizabeth from the assassin, but, if she died, Mary would never succeed to the throne. Her life would be forfeit, in any case. Elizabeth followed this up by an alliance with James VI for mutual defence of their religion, and by sending Leicester with an army to aid

<sup>1</sup> Parma had *promised* him pay. He was, however, penniless; a gift from William himself, in reward for a piece of news, provided the money to buy the pistols.

the Dutch. Little came of it save the battle of Zutphen, wherein the chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney met his death.

So stood affairs at the beginning of the year 1586. In May, Walsingham intercepted a letter from Mary to Mendoza, in which she disinherited her son James, and made over all **Babington's** her claims to Philip of Spain. This, however, was **plot.** only the beginning. Another plot was brewing. Savage, an English officer serving with Parma, took an oath that he would murder Elizabeth. Mendoza, now ambassador in France, suggested that Cecil and Walsingham had best be killed also. The English agent for the plot was Antony Babington, a Catholic attached to Elizabeth's Court, who found five other assassins to join Savage. Walsingham's chief spy, however, had wormed himself into the secret. The letters between Mary and the plotters were intercepted, deciphered, copied, and forwarded, and so the plot grew under Walsingham's fingers. The object was to be sure of Mary's "privity" to the scheme to murder; that once established, nothing could save her. At last, in July, she wrote: "Affairs being thus prepared, then shall it be time to *set the six gentlemen at work*". That was enough. Mary's papers were seized, and she was tried before commissioners at Fotheringay.

**Mary's** Inevitably she was found guilty; Parliament petitioned **execution.** for her immediate execution. Elizabeth hesitated; to put Mary to death was to change the whole face of politics, to embark on all kinds of new dangers. But Parliament and the Privy Council were determined on Mary's death, and the warrant for her execution was sent by the Privy Council to Fotheringay; and in February, 1587, Mary was beheaded.

So ended the period of plots with the death of the unhappy woman in whose favour they were made. If Spain was to do anything now, it must be by invasion; the enemy who had fought behind the covert of secrecy and conspiracy must now come into the open.



## 7. The Armada

Since the days of Henry VII a spirit of adventure had sent Englishmen, particularly from the western ports of Plymouth, Bideford, and Bristol, out into the great waters. To explore, to find gold, to trade, and, it may be added, to plunder, were the objects. So went Chancellor to Archangel; Willoughby to the North-east Passage, and to his death, in 1554; Frobisher to Labrador; Davis to the North-west Arctic. Such northern adventures were all attempts to find an English route to the East; the existing roads round the Cape of Good Hope or the Horn were already seized on; they belonged to Portugal and to Spain. The North proved unkindly and inaccessible, however, and there were no inhabitants to buy the cloth which the Englishmen hoped to sell in cold latitudes. Hence the diversion to the warmer latitudes, in particular to the Spanish Main. Spain resented the coming of English ships, and all our trading there had a suspicion of contraband about it, and even a taste of piracy now and again. But the maxim ran, "No peace beyond the line",<sup>1</sup> and though there was often fighting in the Spanish Main, at home Spain, though sorely tried, had kept up a sort of peace with England. The provocation she swallowed was amazing. In a sense she began the violence in the treacherous attack on Sir John Hawkins's flotilla at San Juan in 1568; but Hawkins had no business there, and was meaning to force a sale of the slaves he was carrying. He lost four ships—one of them belonging to the queen—and goods to the value of £100,000; and he and his companion, Francis Drake, barely escaping with their lives, came back angry and revengeful. In 1572 came Drake's attack on Nombre de Dios, his capture of the mule-train loaded with silver, and his first vision of the Pacific. In 1577 he sailed with five ships, the chief being the *Golden Hind*, through Magellan's Straits, fell on the unprotected Spanish towns on the Pacific coast, plundered them, and then crossed the ocean to Java, and so home round

The Adventurers  
and the  
Buccaneers.

<sup>1</sup> The line drawn by Pope Alexander VI, 300 miles west of the Azores, to separate the colonial spheres of Portugal (east) and Spain (west).

the world, bringing back treasure valued at £800,000. For this exploit the queen knighted him on board the *Golden Hind* at Deptford; so substantial a contribution as £800,000 to what may be called the party funds deserved a knighthood. Even so, though Spain remonstrated angrily, no war followed. Each country laid an embargo on the other's vessels in 1585, and the queen sent Drake off again to plunder the Spanish West Indies. Yet even now only two royal ships went; it was a sort of joint-stock piracy; the rest were merchantmen from London and the West and private venturers, some thirty in all. This flotilla pillaged the Spanish islands, sacked Santiago in the Cape Verde, Domingo, and Carthagená, plundering, burning, and holding to ransom, and returned unscathed. The profit was poor,<sup>1</sup> but the damage done enormous.

This raid on the West Indies decided Philip at last. His generals in the Netherlands urged an invasion of England as easy; Spain could collect a huge fleet; and, finally,

**The Armada.** Mary's death, in 1587, made it clear that if the enterprise succeeded it was Philip in person who would profit by it. So the preparations, hitherto lukewarm, were pressed forward, and the Armada would have sailed in 1587, had not Drake's "singeing of the King of Spain's beard"—his attack on the shipping in Cadiz harbour—thrown everything back for a year. Thirty-seven ships and quantities of stores were destroyed, and Drake, after threatening Lisbon, hovered off Cape St. Vincent for six weeks, snapping up Spanish coasters and preventing any movement of ships from the Mediterranean ports. This daring exploit increased the Spanish terror of the terrible "El Draque", but it also displays how excellent was his strategy. Two hundred years before Jervis and Nelson he grasped the value of a vigorous offensive, and the truth that the enemy's coast line should be our frontier in war. He petitioned to be allowed to repeat his attack in 1588, and had the queen consented, probably the Armada would never have sailed. But Elizabeth refused, fearing that the Spanish fleet might elude him and find the Channel bare.

So the Armada, the great enterprise against the heretic, officially

<sup>1</sup> Some £50,000.

blessed by Pope and clergy, with its motto from the Psalms,<sup>1</sup> sailed out of Lisbon on May 20, 1588: 130 ships, with 8000 seamen and 19,000 soldiers—a great fleet. It was to sail up Channel without seeking the English fleet, seize Margate, join Parma, who was to provide 30,000 picked Spanish troops from the Netherlands, and convey him over. The Armada made shocking weather to Corunna, taking nineteen days over it, and put in there to refit, stop leaks, and replace some of the rotting stores which the Spanish contractors had furnished. It did not leave Corunna till July 12, and now, more or less favoured by weather, appeared off the Lizard on July 19. The Channel fleet, under Lord Howard of Effingham, with Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, Fenner, and Raymond, had just put back into Plymouth to get supplies, and was windbound there. The ships were warped out into the Sound and got to sea, but the Spanish fleet passed farther to the southward. Thus the Armada, in spite of all its tardiness, had got into the Channel, and the way was clear; there was no enemy in front except the tiny squadron under Seymour and Wynter, helping the Dutch to watch Parma in the narrow seas.

If the total of ships be counted, the English were more than the Spanish; but omitting the quite small craft that could take no real part, we may reckon that Howard had some seventy ships—many of these small also, and of little fighting value. Of the thirty queen's ships most were well armed and efficient; a dozen or more of the merchantmen could also play their part in a fight. They seemed, however, few and small compared with the size of the enemy. Yet it was not a fight which was to be settled by size or number. The Spaniards were overwhelming if they could bring their whole force to bear, but it remained to be decided whether they could do this.

The fact, realized now, but dimly seen then, is that the two "fleets" were radically different, the Spanish of the past, the English of the future. Fighting mainly in the smoother waters of the Mediterranean, the Spanish ship was a castle on the sea, directed by the sailors, or even at times rowed by galley slaves, but depending for fighting purposes on the fact that it carried a

1 "Exsurge Deus et vindica causam tuam" (Ps. xxxv. 23).



mass of well-drilled soldiers. A Spanish ship carried few guns for its size, and little powder for them. Manœuvring, seamanship, gunnery, were all subordinate matters; the one object was to come at once to close quarters, to board and fight it out with steel and arquebus. So the Spaniards had beaten the Turks in the great sea fight of Lepanto. A Spanish fleet was, briefly, an army at sea.<sup>1</sup> But the English seaman, bred in rougher weather, had developed a more seaworthy type of ship, lower, smaller, stiffer, and faster, offering a smaller target, carrying relatively far more guns, and trusting to do its execution at a distance. In the sixteenth century, guns could not be elevated nor depressed, and good shooting therefore depended on steering, and sailing qualities. Thus in a breeze the Spanish ships, badly steered and handled, heeling over before the wind, sent their weather broadsides flying skywards, while their lee guns fired into the sea. The English ships, however, on a more even keel, made sure work, often hulling the Spaniards' exposed sides below the water-line. Even the Spanish size and numbers were less formidable than they appeared. Out of their 130 only fifty were efficient men-of-war; the rest, store-ships and transports that could not fight, unless by boarding. The total Spanish broadside was in weight only about two-thirds of the English. Their commander, Medina Sidonia, was a landsman who had offered Philip a number of excellent reasons why he should not be put in command,<sup>2</sup> and was certainly incapable of handling a fleet. Finally, now that the English had got the weather-gage, and could follow the Armada up Channel, making a running fight of it, they could close or not as they wished; and every Spanish ship that was crippled was bound to lag behind and be taken.

These things, however, were to be made clear on the way up Channel; they were not yet seen. All that was known was that the Armada was in the Channel: beacon fires blazed; the militia was called out; 70,000 men gathered in London, and Elizabeth reviewed her men at Tilbury.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Medina Sidonia was to hand over the conduct of the enterprise to the Duke of Parma (the general) as soon as he met him at Dunkirk.

<sup>2</sup> His last and least valid argument was that he was sick when he went to sea. But so was Nelson.

Meanwhile, for a breathless week, England waited, and the Armada lumbered on its way up Channel, fighting on the 21st, on the 23rd off St. Alban's Head, and on the 25th off St. Catherine's, losing some ships, yet by no means crippled. It anchored at Calais on the 27th, ready to embark Parma's men.

Here came the first great blow. Parma was not ready; the Dutch held him blockaded. He wrote to Medina Sidonia bidding him clear the sea of the English and Dutch; that done, all would be well.

While Medina Sidonia and his captains were digesting this unsatisfactory reply, eight fire ships were sent drifting with the tide into Calais Roads. Panic seized the Spaniards, who cut their cables and sailed eastwards, scattering as they went. The next day (July 29), of the whole Spanish fleet which was nominally engaged, only fifteen, those round Medina Sidonia, managed to come to close quarters; but they were shorter of powder even than the English: in the words of a Spaniard who took part in the battle, "they fighting with their great ordnance, and our men defending themselves with harquebuss fire and musketry". Some were taken, some sunk, and some ran aground, a fate that would have befallen them all had the wind not shifted more to the southward. But by the evening the Armada—still to Drake's mind "wonderful and strong, yet we pluck their feathers little by little"—in reality a beaten fleet, was flying northward. Storms, the rocks of Scotland and Ireland, did the rest. Far out into the Atlantic<sup>1</sup> as the ships beat their way, yet their leeway brought them in again, and Mull, the Giant's Causeway, Donegal, and Achill all took toll of them. Twelve were embayed in Sligo Bay, and to those who got ashore the wild Irish of the west were as merciless as the sea. Fifty-three only got back to Spain. Philip gave the weather-worn survivors magnanimous consolation: "I sent you forth to fight with men, and not with the elements". Elizabeth, piously, was of the same mind, inscribing on her Armada medal, *Afflavit Deus*, "God blew with His wind, and they were scattered". Yet the fact is not so; the Armada had all in its favour till the panic at Calais; till, in short, it had failed. And how complete the failure was, is revealed by a few

<sup>1</sup> 400 miles westward from the north of Scotland.

figures. In the first day's battle only two Englishmen were killed, and only sixty in the whole fighting. The Spaniards *lost more ships than we did men*. The Spanish fleet was hopelessly overmatched in the kind of warfare it encountered. It could never have beat its way down Channel against the English fleet; thus there only remained the way round by the north, and that was certain destruction.

So the great thundercloud that had gathered against England for close on forty years hung imminent for a week, broke, and passed away.

## 8. The Last Days of Elizabeth

Nearly fifteen more years remained to the great queen after the Armada was beaten, and they were fifteen years of glory. Yet in a sense the reign ends in 1588. The climax was reached, the day won, the policy of the queen and her ministers triumphant. What follows may be grouped under two heads: it was either the natural gathering in of what had been already won, or it was the low beginnings of what was to be important hereafter; it was either gleaning or sowing. Thus in the gleaning came the remains of the war with Spain, now at the mercy of English sea captains. In 1589 Drake led an expedition to Portugal, and in 1590 Sir Richard Grenville fought the amazing fight of "the one and the fifty-three", where, though the—

"Little *Revenge* herself went down by the island crags,  
To be lost evermore in the main",

the memory of her and her commander will abide so long as the Jack flies in the wind. Drake, and Hawkins with him, tried a last cruise to the West Indies in 1594, which failed, both commanders dying at sea.<sup>1</sup> Two years later Howard, Raleigh, and Essex sacked Cadiz again, destroying the Spanish ships at their moorings. These were the great things; more fatal to Spain was

<sup>1</sup> "Drake he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),  
Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios bay,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe."



the fact that every cargo from the Indies, every ship crossing the Atlantic, every reinforcement going to the Low Countries, had to run the gauntlet of English buccaneers; and little escaped them. So the wealth and power of Spain was drained away. Her silver from the New World robbed, her rich possessions in the Netherlands lost to her, her decline began, and became more and more marked. In France, too, Spanish policy failed; the Huguenot Henry of Navarre established himself on the throne with Elizabeth's aid, in defiance of the Guises and the Spanish party; and, once there, began the building up of that great French ascendancy which was to replace the Hapsburg power that had domineered over Europe so long.

Shortly after the Armada many of Elizabeth's older ministers—those servants who had served her so well in her critical years—died: Leicester, Walsingham, Hatton, were all dead by 1591. Burleigh survived till 1598. Of the younger men, Robert Cecil inherited his father, Burleigh's, caution; but Sir Walter Raleigh and Essex were of a wilder school. With all his romantic qualities, the polish that won him the queen's favour, the adventurous spirit which drove him to found his colony in Virginia, and explore Guiana and the Orinoco, Raleigh never had the gift to win men to follow him, as Drake had. Essex was still less governable than Raleigh. Sent out to the prodigiously difficult task of reducing Ireland to order, he made a feeble treaty with Tyrone, the chief Irish leader, instead of fighting him; and then, knowing that the queen would never ratify it, returned headlong from Ireland without leave, and intruded muddy and travel-worn on the queen's presence. She, much affronted at his whole conduct, banished him from Court. Furious at this, Essex fell into treason, tampered with the Scots and some Catholic lords, and eventually tried to raise a rebellion in London. He was taken prisoner and beheaded in 1601.

The names of Essex and Raleigh thus raise to our minds two important issues in history, the matter of Ireland and the beginnings of our colonial empire; but they will come up for treatment later. Elizabeth's policy in Ireland settled nothing; it only led up to all the disastrous events in the seventeenth century—the Rebellion, Cromwell's conquest, and the bitter struggle in William's

reign. In spite of Gilbert and Raleigh, no Elizabethan colony was successful. All failed; at the end of the reign England had not yet fixed her grip on one bit of land overseas. Thus the story of our colonial empire really belongs to a later time. Again we postpone to the seventeenth century the story of the rise of the Puritan party and the new spirit which animated Parliament. These are two new factors of paramount importance, but their day was not yet. It is true that signs of each appear in Elizabeth's reign; there were many men who thought that Elizabeth's settlement of the Church did not go far enough, stubborn men who were hostile to any Established Church, men who desired complete liberty to preach what seemed good to them, and were angry when they were forbidden to do so. Such were the Brownists, the Baptists, and the followers of Thomas Cartwright, who wrote libellously against the bishops in the *Mar-Prelate Tracts*. But all this really belongs to the epoch of the Stuarts and not to the Tudors. So, too, with Parliament, where now

Queen and  
Parliament.

and again rash members ventured to offer unpalatable advice to the queen, generally on the subject of her marriage—advice which she contemptuously refused, sometimes despotically rewarding the adviser with imprisonment. It is true that at the end of her reign Parliament appeared to win a victory when the queen promised to grant no more Monopolies—a word which seems to bear a foretaste of the Constitutional struggle about it. But in reality throughout the reign queen and Parliament were on excellent terms; she steered the ship, and they looked on, only daring to speak to the woman at the wheel when they thought that she was blundering—and, of course, they were sure she was blundering when she refused to marry and provide an heir to the throne. As a rule, however, the history of Parliament is described in the Speaker's words to his queen when she demanded of him what had passed in the session. "May it please your majesty, seven weeks have passed." It was a Parliamentary millennium.

It is, of course, characteristic of the great reign that it produced what is called the "Elizabethan school" of letters. Apart from Shakespeare, who stands unrivalled in all time, there was Spenser, whose *Faery Queene* is

The Elizabethan  
men of letters.

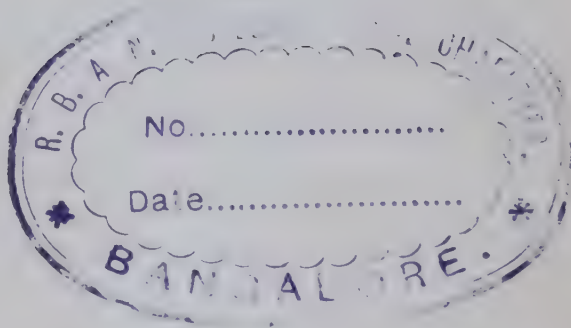
the most poetic of romances in the old-world style, and Francis Bacon, whose *Essays* still surpass, in their profundity of thought and terse vigour of expression, anything that modern essay-writing can reach; Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* remains a model of judgment and moderation in theological controversy; Christopher Marlowe, as a playwright, was, in gorgeousness of imagination, hardly inferior to Shakespeare; while the writers of lyric verse, of whom Sir Philip Sidney was the most distinguished, gave England a new form of literary expression, graceful, polished, and true. All these men's work is characteristically English. They borrowed old stories—Shakespeare most of all—and they sometimes seem to imitate old models. But what appear at first sight borrowings and imitations are in all cases so seized upon and mastered that they become original. The spirit is breathed upon the dry bones so that they become flesh and blood again. This intense vitality of the Elizabethan school, the alertness of mind, the joyful outlook, the breaking and casting away of old fetters and the adventuring out into new worlds of thought, the vigorous patriotism and Englishness of them, is after all only the expression in the finest minds of what every Englishman of Elizabeth's time felt. For him the fetters of the old learning were broken, the years of dread were over, the enemy humbled, the new world open, and his land, his England, safe at last.

So the great queen died—a true Tudor, in that she understood her people, even better than her ministers did; singularly unscrupulous, yet magnificently successful; unlovable in character, yet romantically beloved; served throughout her reign with wonderful loyalty, yet as parsimonious in her reward of it as she was with her money; vain, untruthful, capricious, and sometimes mean; yet, with all her defects, indubitably great. Her policy, so hesitating in appearance, was in its very uncertainty profoundly wise. Fools, in difficulties, rush into hasty decisions. What England wanted was time. Time for the Established Church to grow firmer, time for the new alliance with Scotland to settle, time to breed the race of seamen who beat off the Armada; and that Elizabeth gave England. At the end came concord at home, a high reputation abroad, and—Elizabeth's greatest gift—



a succession to the throne that would afford no chance of baronial quarrelling, would open no door to aggression from Rome and the Catholics, would involve England in no dangerous entanglement with either France or Spain, but would bring about that inestimable boon, the union of England and Scotland under one king. So the forty-five momentous years passed to a serene conclusion:

“Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.”



TIME CHARTS  
CHIEF EVENTS, 1300-1600

# CHIEF EVENTS, 1300-1500

Dates.	Sovereign.	Foreign Politics.	Social and Religious.	Lancaster and York.	Scotland.
1300	Edward II, 1307.			Semi-royal Families.	Execution of Wallace, 1305. Robert Bruce, 1306.
1375	Edward III, 1327.	Philip VI, 1328. Hundred Years War (1st part: Plantagenet). Battle of Sluys, 1340. Battle of Crécy, 1346.  Battle of Poitiers, 1356. Treaty of Bretigny, 1360. Battle of Navarete, 1367. First Period of Decline.	Black Death, 1349. Statutes of Labourers.  Wyclif and John of Gaunt. Good Parliament, 1376.  Peasant Revolt, 1381. The Lollards.	Battle of Boroughbridge. Death of Thomas of Lancaster, 1322.	Battle of Bannockburn, 1314.  Treaty of Northampton, 1328. Death of Robert Bruce. Accession of David II, 1329. Battle of Dupplin, 1332. Battle of Halidon Hill, 1333.  Battle of Neville's Cross, 1346.
1350					
1375	Richard II, 1377.  Henry IV, 1399.			John of Gaunt and House of Lancaster. The Lords Appellant, 1387. Death of John of Gaunt. Throne seized by Lancastrian, Henry IV, 1399.	Robert II, 1371.  • •  Robert III, 1390.



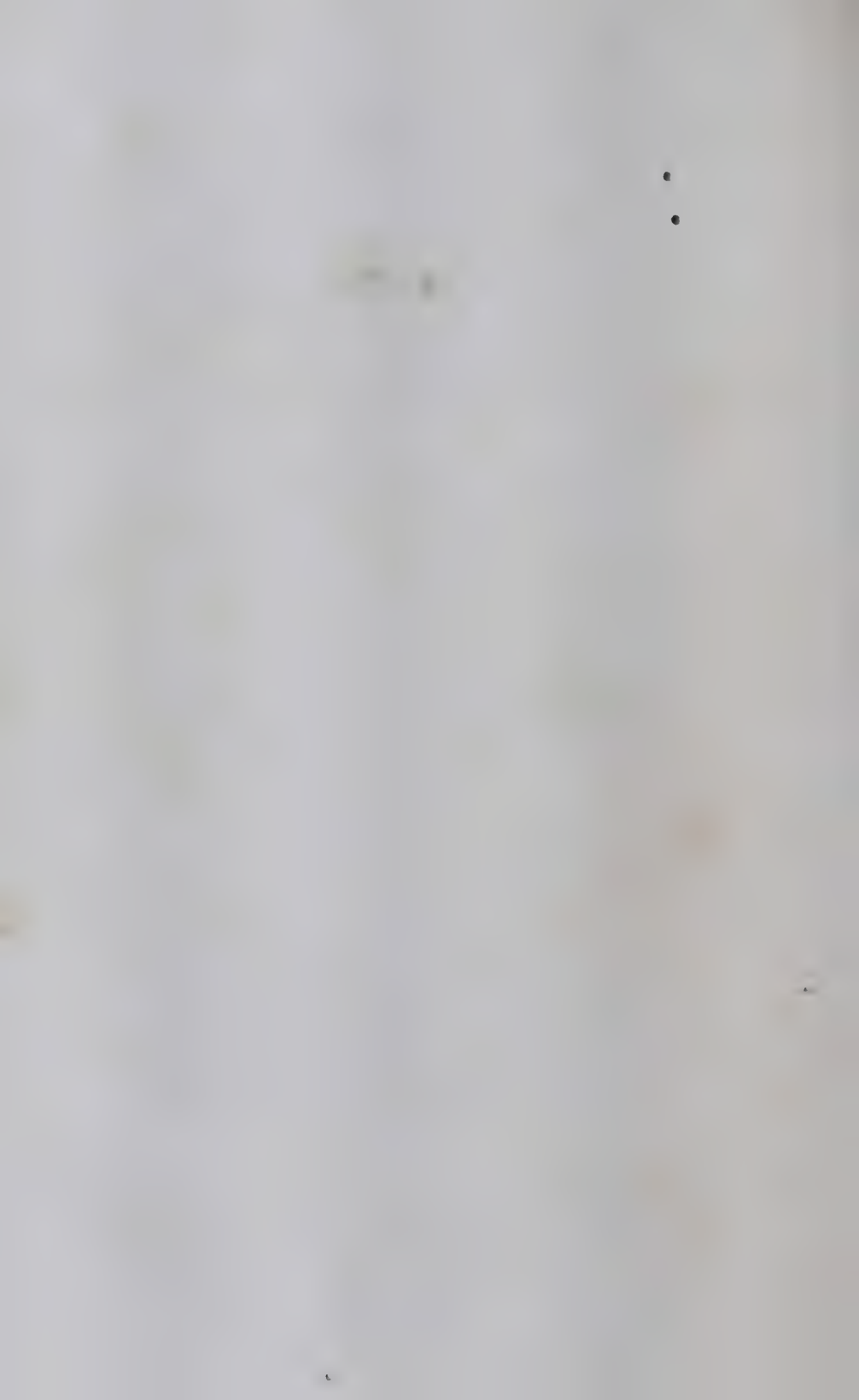
Dates.	Sovereign.	Foreign Politics.	Social and Religious.	Lancaster and York.	Scotland.
1400		Hundred Years War (2nd part : Lancaster) Burgundy and Armagnac. Murder of Duke of Orleans, 1407. Battle of Agincourt, 1415. Murder of Duke of Burgundy, 1419. Treaty of Troyes, 1420.	De Haeretico Comburendo, 1401.  Sir John Oldcastle, 1416.	The Percy-Mortimer Plot. Battle of Shrewsbury, 1405.  The Cambridge Plot (Mortimer-York), 1415.	Battle of Homildon, 1402. James I, 1406.
1425	Henry V, 1413.  Henry VI, 1422.	Joan of Arc. Second Period of Decline, 1428. Congress of Arras. End of Anglo-Burgundian Alliance, 1435. Battle of Châtillon, 1453. End of Hundred Years War.		Lancastrian quarrels: Bedford and Gloucester.  Murder of Suffolk. Cade's Rebellion, 1450. Birth of King's Son, 1453. Battle of St. Albans, 1455. Battle of Wakefield, 1460. Battle of Towton, 1461. Quarrel of York and Neville. [1471. Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, Break-up of York's power. Battle of Bosworth, 1485. Battle of Stoke, 1487. Perkin Warbeck.	James II, 1437.  Fall of Black Douglasses. Battle of Arkinholm, 1455. The Red Douglasses. James III, 1460.
1475	Edward V, 1461.  Edward V, 1483. Richard III, 1483. Henry VII, 1485.	Charles VIII's Invasion of Italy, 1494. "The House of Hapsburg."			Battle of Sauchieburn, 1488. James IV, 1488.
1500					

# CHIEF EVENTS, 1500-1600

Dates.	Sovereign.	Foreign and Political.	Social and Religious.	Scotland.
1500	Henry VIII, 1509.	<p>Marriage of Prince Henry with Katherine of Aragon.</p> <p>Holy League, 1511.</p> <p>Wolsey.</p> <p>French Alliance, 1514.</p> <p>Death of Louis XII, 1515.</p> <p>Death of Ferdinand of Spain, 1516.</p> <p>Death of Maximilian, 1519.</p> <p>Charles V, Emperor.</p> <p>Battle of Pavia, 1525.</p> <p>Sack of Rome, 1527.</p> <p>Fall of Wolsey, 1529.</p>	<p>Luther, 1517.</p> <p>Question of King's Divorce, 1528.</p> <p>Reformation Parliament, 1529-35.</p> <p>Act of Appeals, 1533.</p> <p>Act of Supremacy, 1534.</p> <p>Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536.</p> <p>Dissolution of the Greater Monasteries.</p> <p>The Six Articles, 1539. The Great Bible.</p> <p>Death of Cromwell, 1540.</p> <p>Somerset Protector.</p> <p>First Prayer Book. Rising in the West and Ket's Rebellion.</p>	<p>Battle of Flodden, 1513. Accession of James V.</p> <p>Darnick Field (Melrose), 1526.</p> <p>Battle of Solway Moss, 1542. Death of James V.</p> <p>Mary Queen of Scots.</p> <p>Execution of Wishart, 1545.</p> <p>Murder of Beaton, 1546.</p> <p>Battle of Pinkie, 1547.</p>
1525	Edward VI, 1547.			

Dates.	Sovereign.	Foreign and Political.	Social and Religious.	Scotland.
1550	Mary, 1553. Elizabeth, 1558.	The Spanish Match, 1554. Loss of Calais, 1558. Treaty of Câteau Cambrésis, 1559. Death of Henry II of France, 1560. Outbreak of Wars of Religion in France, 1562. Rebellion in the Netherlands.  Period of Plots in England, 1568-87. Ridolfi, 1571. St. Bartholomew, 1572.  Drake's Circumnavigation, 1577-81. Campion's Plot, 1581. Murder of William the Silent, 1584. Throckmorton's Plot. Babington's Plot, 1586. Cadiz, 1587. Execution of Mary. The Armada, 1588. Accession of Henry of Navarre, 1589. Richard Grenville, 1590. Edict of Nantes, 1598.	Execution of Somerset. Northumberland in Power. Second Prayer Book, 1552. Wyatt's Rebellion. Reconciliation with Rome, 1554. The Persecution. Burning of Cranmer, 1556.  The Religious Settlement, 1559.          The Rising in the North, 1569.	• •  Marriage of Mary and the Dauphin Francis, 1558. Return of Knox. The Lords of the Con- gregation, 1559. Treaty of Leith, 1560. Return of Mary Queen of Scots, 1561.  Marriage with Darnley, 1565. Murder of Rizzio, 1566. Marriage of Mary and Bothwell. Battle of Langside, 1568. Mary's Flight to England.          Execution of Mary, 1587.
1575				
1600				





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